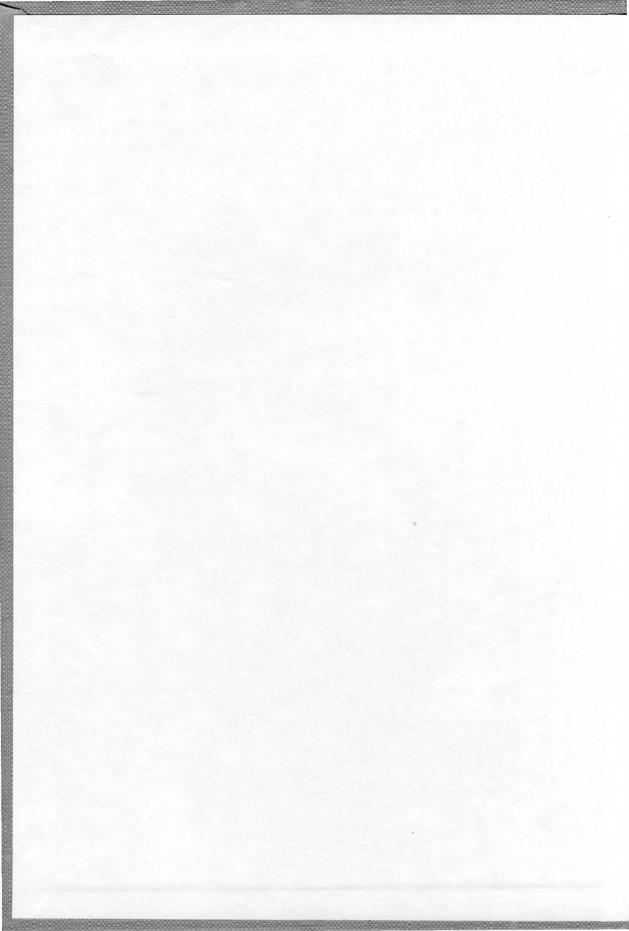
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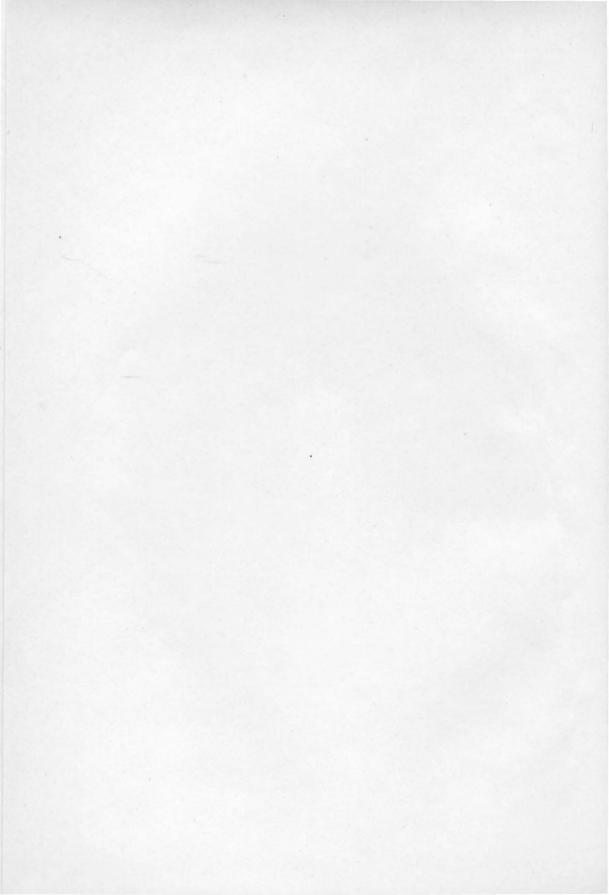
# ANGELA MERICI

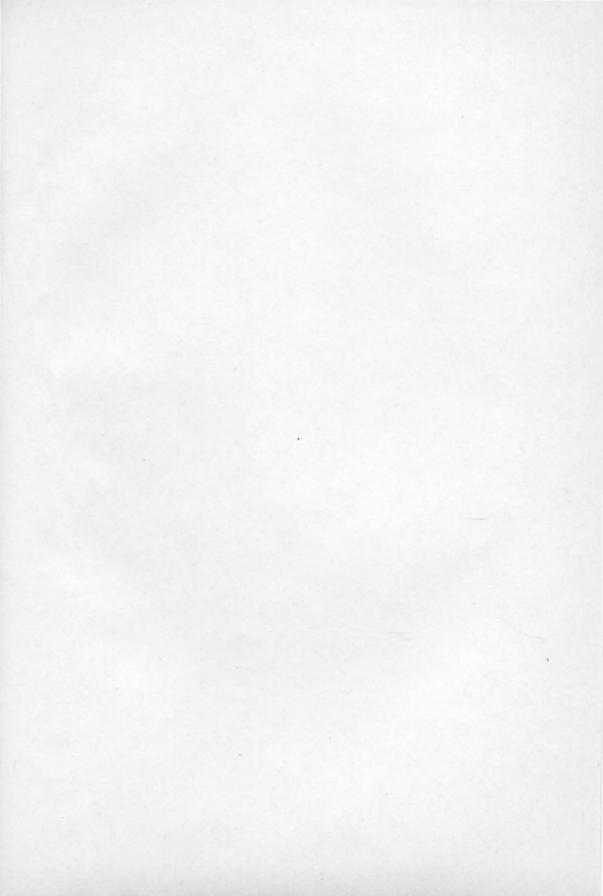
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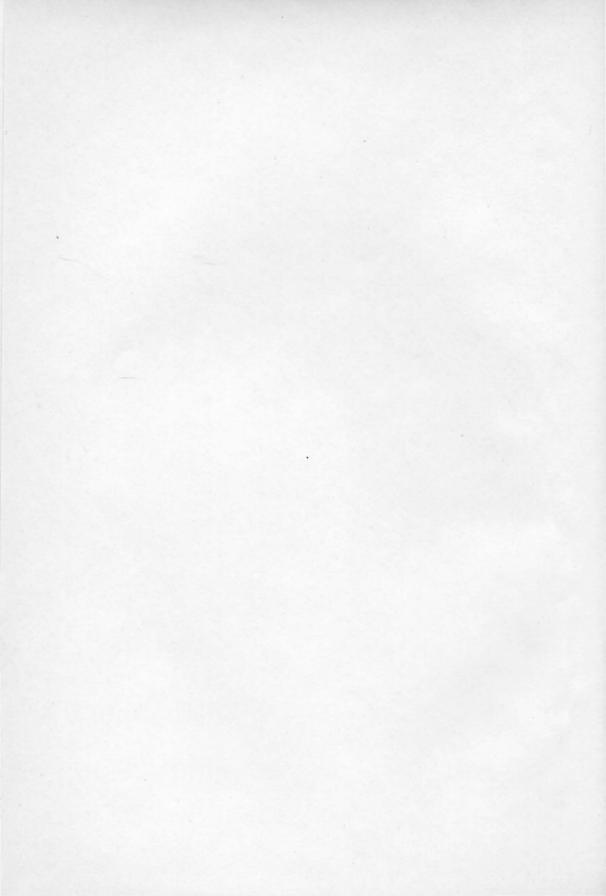
**EDITRICE ÀNCORA MILANO** 











## ANGELA MERICI

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# ANGELA MERICI

Contribution towards a Biography

Preface by Professor Massimo Marcocchi of the Catholic University of Milan

Introduction by Professor Christopher Cairns of the University of Aberystwyth (Wales)

Translated by M. Ignatius Stone

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ANGELA MERICI

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... by your holy Name,
may it be blessed
above the sand of the sea,
above the drops of rain,
above the multitude of stars.
Angela Merici

#### LIBRARIES AND ARCHIVES

#### ABBREVIATIONS

AC	Brescia	Diocesan Archives in S. Giuseppe, Capitular Archives
ASB	Brescia	State Archives
ASC	Brescia	Archivio Storico Civico, at the Biblioteca Queriniana
AV	Brescia	Episcopal Archives
BQ	Brescia	Biblioteca Queriniana
AACD	Desenzano (BS)	Archivio Antico Comunale
ASDM	Milan	Archivio Storico Diocesano
ASM	Milan	State Archives
BA	Milan	Biblioteca Ambrosiana
BT	Milan	Biblioteca Trivulziana
AGUUR	Rome	Archivum Generale Ursulinarum Unionis Romanae
BN	Rome	National Library
BV	Rome	Biblioteca Vallicelliana
AACS	Salò (BS)	Archivio Antico del Comune
ASV	Vatican	Vatican Secret Archives
B.Vat	Vatican	Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana
ASPV	Venice	Patriarchal Seminary Archives

#### OTHER ABBREVIATIONS

D	Document in the Documentary Appendix
PE	Box of "polizze d'estimo" in the ASC
SLG	Secondo Libro Generale
APC	Process Acts of Beatification and Canonisation of Angela Merici
APC.Vat.	Process Acts at the ASV, S.C. Rituum

N.B. The edition of the documents is the common scientific edition: the abbreviations have been more or less developed according to the situation; punctuation, capital or small letters, letters u and v, and i and j have been adapted to the modern usage. The same for the accents.

The original form of the Italian texts quoted, and translated in the volume, is usually given in the footnotes, unless they are taken from the texts transcribed in the Documentary Appendix.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Fo	reword	XV
Int	troduction: Saint Angela Merici in her time	
	PART I	
	SOURCES	
I.	Documentary sources	3
	Documents from Desenzano and Salò	3
	a) Desenzano	4
	b) Salò	7
2.	Documentation from Brescia	9
	a) Angela Merici's circle	9
	b) The religious situation	11
80	c) Institutes of good works	15
3.	Specific documentation	18
	a) Writings of Angela Merici	19
	b) Writings of Gabriele Cozzano	25 27
	c) Books of the Company	30
	e) Executed deeds	34
	General outline of Merician historiography	37
1.	16th and 17th centuries	38
	a) Francesco Landini	38
	b) Giovan Battista Nazari	40
	c) Mattia Bellintani	44 48
	d) Ottavio Gondi	52
	e) Jean-Hugues Quarré	56
2	18th and 19th centuries	58
۷.	a) Carlo Doneda	58
	b) Girolamo Lombardi	60
	c) Germano Jacopo Gussago	62

IX

3.	d) Filippo Maria Salvatori  20th century  a) Giuditta Bertolotti  b) Cecylja Łubieńska  c) Paolo Guerrini  d) Antonio Cistellini  e) Teresa Ledóchowska.	63 64 65 66 68 69 70
	PART II	
	ANGELA MERICI	
I.	The years at Desenzano	75
1.	The land of birth	75
2.	The Merici family	77
	a) The Mericis	78
	b) Relatives at Salò	83 85
	d) Everyday life	90
3.	Angela Merici	99
	a) Childhood and adolescence	99
	b) The vision at the "Machetto"	102
II.	The stay at Salò and the return to Desenzano	107
1.	Salò	108
	a) Youth	108
	b) "Ability to read"	112
	c) Austere life	117
	e) "The Tempter"	122
2.	Desenzano	123
	a) The return	123
	b) The vision of the "ladder"	124
	c) The "Brudazzo"	127 128
III	The years at Brescia: the witnesses	131
	a) Caterina Patengola	132 134
	b) Girolamo Patengola	137
	d) Agostino Gallo	139
	e) Giacomo Chizzola	140
	f) Gabriele Cozzano	145
	g) Isabetta Prato	148 156
	in a maintain with the court of	1,0

IV. The years at Brescia: the testimonies									159
a) The "apostolic" life									159
b) The life of prayer									163
c) The life of penance					7				167
d) The "good offices"									170
e) The service of the word					٠	•	• •	 ٠	175
V. The pilgrimages									183
1. In the Holy Land									184
a) Towards the Holy Places									184
b) At Jerusalem									191
c) The return									192
d) The stay at Venice									195
2. At Rome									199
3. The invitations to remain									202
a) The oldest testimonies									202
b) The later interpretations									205
4. At Mantua									211
5. At Varallo									213
Appendix Note									216
a) The "Divino Amore"									216
b) The Hospital for Incurables									218
c) Merician circle - Divino Amore - Incu	ırabili			٠.	٠			 i	221
d) The Confraternity of the Most Holy	ırabili Γrinity	Inc	: :	1	•	•		mon	221 226
d) The Confraternity of the Most Holy	Γrinity	- Ext		1.1		1		1100	226
d) The Confraternity of the Most Holy 7.  VI. The last ten years	Γrinity · · ·	i moi				ilu 18		 MOO	226 229
d) The Confraternity of the Most Holy 7  VI. The last ten years	Γrinity · · · · · ·	tan tan				ilu Ilu Il		AF AT	226 229 229
d) The Confraternity of the Most Holy 7  VI. The last ten years	Γrinity  							HOO OF AT	226 229 229 232
d) The Confraternity of the Most Holy TVI. The last ten years	Crinity	min min				the and the same of the same o		AT AT AT	226 229 229 232 238
d) The Confraternity of the Most Holy TVI. The last ten years	Γrinity				ia ia ia ia ia ia ia ia ia ia ia ia ia i	in the state of th			226 229 229 232 238 238
d) The Confraternity of the Most Holy TVI. The last ten years  1. At Cremona  2. The preliminaries of the foundation  3. The last years  a) At St Afra  b) The death	Γrinity					The STATE OF THE		AF AT AT AT AT AT	226 229 229 232 238 238 240
d) The Confraternity of the Most Holy TVI. The last ten years  1. At Cremona  2. The preliminaries of the foundation  3. The last years  a) At St Afra  b) The death  c) The burial					in in the state of	the state of the s			226 229 229 232 238 238
d) The Confraternity of the Most Holy TVI. The last ten years  1. At Cremona  2. The preliminaries of the foundation  3. The last years  a) At St Afra  b) The death					in in the state of	the state of the s			226 229 229 232 238 238 240
d) The Confraternity of the Most Holy TVI. The last ten years  1. At Cremona  2. The preliminaries of the foundation  3. The last years  a) At St Afra  b) The death  c) The burial  VII. The foundation of the Company	Γrinity					the state of the state of			226 229 229 232 238 238 240 243
d) The Confraternity of the Most Holy TVI. The last ten years  1. At Cremona  2. The preliminaries of the foundation  3. The last years  a) At St Afra  b) The death  c) The burial  VII. The foundation of the Company  1. The wait	Γrinity					the training to the training t		mos de la composition della co	226 229 232 238 238 240 243 253
d) The Confraternity of the Most Holy TVI. The last ten years  1. At Cremona  2. The preliminaries of the foundation  3. The last years  a) At St Afra  b) The death c) The burial  VII. The foundation of the Company  1. The wait  2. The "patroness" Saint Ursula  a) History and cult	Γrinity	mon to			in in the state of				226 229 232 238 238 240 243 253 253
d) The Confraternity of the Most Holy TVI. The last ten years  1. At Cremona  2. The preliminaries of the foundation  3. The last years  a) At St Afra  b) The death c) The burial  VII. The foundation of the Company  1. The wait  2. The "patroness" Saint Ursula  a) History and cult  b) The legend	Γrinity					the state of the s			226 229 232 238 238 240 243 253 253 258 259 263
d) The Confraternity of the Most Holy TVI. The last ten years  1. At Cremona 2. The preliminaries of the foundation 3. The last years a) At St Afra b) The death c) The burial  VII. The foundation of the Company 1. The wait 2. The "patroness" Saint Ursula a) History and cult b) The legend c) Angela - Saint Ursula	Crinity				in the state of th				226 229 232 238 238 240 243 253 253 258 259
d) The Confraternity of the Most Holy TVI. The last ten years  1. At Cremona  2. The preliminaries of the foundation  3. The last years  a) At St Afra  b) The death  c) The burial  VII. The foundation of the Company  1. The wait  2. The "patroness" Saint Ursula  a) History and cult  b) The legend  c) Angela - Saint Ursula  3. The realisation.	Γrinity								226 229 232 238 238 240 243 253 258 259 263 266 270
d) The Confraternity of the Most Holy TVI. The last ten years  1. At Cremona  2. The preliminaries of the foundation  3. The last years  a) At St Afra  b) The death  c) The burial  VII. The foundation of the Company  1. The wait  2. The "patroness" Saint Ursula  a) History and cult  b) The legend  c) Angela - Saint Ursula  3. The realisation  a) The first virgins of the Company	Γrinity								226 229 232 238 238 240 243 253 258 259 263 266 270 270
d) The Confraternity of the Most Holy TVI. The last ten years  1. At Cremona  2. The preliminaries of the foundation  3. The last years  a) At St Afra  b) The death  c) The burial  VII. The foundation of the Company  1. The wait  2. The "patroness" Saint Ursula  a) History and cult  b) The legend  c) Angela - Saint Ursula  3. The realisation.	Γrinity								226 229 232 238 238 240 243 253 258 259 263 266 270
d) The Confraternity of the Most Holy TVI. The last ten years  1. At Cremona 2. The preliminaries of the foundation 3. The last years a) At St Afra b) The death c) The burial  VII. The foundation of the Company 1. The wait 2. The "patroness" Saint Ursula a) History and cult b) The legend c) Angela - Saint Ursula 3. The realisation. a) The first virgins of the Company b) 25 November 1535.	Γrinity								226 229 232 238 238 240 243 253 258 259 263 266 270 270 275
d) The Confraternity of the Most Holy TVI. The last ten years  1. At Cremona  2. The preliminaries of the foundation  3. The last years  a) At St Afra  b) The death  c) The burial  VII. The foundation of the Company  1. The wait  2. The "patroness" Saint Ursula  a) History and cult  b) The legend  c) Angela - Saint Ursula  3. The realisation  a) The first virgins of the Company	Γrinity								226 229 232 238 238 240 243 253 258 259 263 266 270 270

2.	The government	291
3.	The members of the government	294
	a) The "virgins"	294
	b) The "matrons"	301
	c) The "men"	310
	PART III	
	THE MERICIAN HERITAGE	
I.	The Company after 1540	317
1.		318
	a) The initial bewilderment	318
	b) The pressure towards the cloistered life	319
	c) The cincture	322
2.	The pontifical approval	329
	a) The petition	330
	b) The recipients and the executors	334
	c) The executory process	342
	d) The concessions and the language	345
Ar	ppendix Note	350
Th	ne "books" of the Company	350
11.	From division to reunification	357
1.		358
1.	a) The first signs	358
	b) The election of Veronica Buzzi	360
2		363
۷.	Ginevra Luzzago	364
	b) The canonical confirmation	365
2		371
٥.	The reconciliation	3/1
III	. Between institution and reform	375
1.	The chief initiatives	375
	a) The printing of the Rule	376
	b) The Company vis-à-vis the "law"	376
	c) The Ritual	380
2.	The institutional changes	388
	a) The new structures	388
	b) The "directory of offices"	392
	c) The intervention of Cardinal Borromeo	400
IV	. The Canonical Processes	407
	The preliminaries	407
	a) In the 16th century	407
	b) In the 17th century	410

	a) In the diocese of Rome	415 418 421 425 433 433 437 444 447
	The Rule of the Company of Saint Ursula	451
1.	The Rule of Angela Merici	452 460
۷.	The Rule of Brescia	460
	b) The 1620 edition	465
	c) The 1672 edition	467
	d) The 1673 edition	470
	e) The Verzeri-Girelli Rule	473
3.	Other Rules	488
	a) The Rule of Foligno	488 494
	c) The Rule of Bologna	505
	d) The Rule of Milan	513
	e) "Rule" and Rules	519
	ale so that means the least hand a first of the second region of the second second region of	
	DOCUMENTARY APPENDIX	
1	the party and the party of the state of the	532
1 2	Trivulzian codex of Rule	543
2	Trivulzian codex of Rule	543 553
3 4	Trivulzian codex of Rule	543 553 569
2 3 4 5	Trivulzian codex of Rule Turlino edition of Rule Rule: Trivulzian codex and Turlino edition Ricordi (Counsels) Testamento (Legacies)	543 553 569 574
2 3 4 5 6	Trivulzian codex of Rule Turlino edition of Rule Rule: Trivulzian codex and Turlino edition Ricordi (Counsels) Testamento (Legacies) Angela Merici's act of election	543 553 569 574 579
2 3 4 5	Trivulzian codex of Rule Turlino edition of Rule Rule: Trivulzian codex and Turlino edition Ricordi (Counsels) Testamento (Legacies) Angela Merici's act of election Angela Merici's obituary notice	543 553 569 574
2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	Trivulzian codex of Rule Turlino edition of Rule Rule: Trivulzian codex and Turlino edition Ricordi (Counsels) Testamento (Legacies) Angela Merici's act of election Angela Merici's obituary notice Transcription of Angela Merici's petition.	543 553 569 574 579 582
2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	Trivulzian codex of Rule Turlino edition of Rule Rule: Trivulzian codex and Turlino edition Ricordi (Counsels) Testamento (Legacies) Angela Merici's act of election Angela Merici's obituary notice Transcription of Angela Merici's petition. Letter of the Grand Penitentiary Office, rosary, discipline, hair-shirt: description	543 553 569 574 579 582 582 583 584
2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	Trivulzian codex of Rule Turlino edition of Rule Rule: Trivulzian codex and Turlino edition Ricordi (Counsels) Testamento (Legacies) Angela Merici's act of election Angela Merici's obituary notice Transcription of Angela Merici's petition. Letter of the Grand Penitentiary Office, rosary, discipline, hair-shirt: description Office, rosary, discipline, hair-shirt: donation.	543 553 569 574 579 582 582 583 584 587
2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12	Trivulzian codex of Rule Turlino edition of Rule Rule: Trivulzian codex and Turlino edition Ricordi (Counsels) Testamento (Legacies) Angela Merici's act of election Angela Merici's obituary notice Transcription of Angela Merici's petition. Letter of the Grand Penitentiary Office, rosary, discipline, hair-shirt: description Office, rosary, discipline, hair-shirt: donation. Ancient tomb of Saint Angela.	543 553 569 574 579 582 582 583 584 587 590
2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13	Trivulzian codex of Rule Turlino edition of Rule Rule: Trivulzian codex and Turlino edition Ricordi (Counsels) Testamento (Legacies) Angela Merici's act of election Angela Merici's obituary notice Transcription of Angela Merici's petition. Letter of the Grand Penitentiary Office, rosary, discipline, hair-shirt: description Office, rosary, discipline, hair-shirt: donation. Ancient tomb of Saint Angela. "Rasse" (denunciations)	543 553 569 574 579 582 583 584 587 590 591
2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14	Trivulzian codex of Rule Turlino edition of Rule Rule: Trivulzian codex and Turlino edition Ricordi (Counsels) Testamento (Legacies) Angela Merici's act of election Angela Merici's obituary notice Transcription of Angela Merici's petition. Letter of the Grand Penitentiary Office, rosary, discipline, hair-shirt: description Office, rosary, discipline, hair-shirt: donation. Ancient tomb of Saint Angela "Rasse" (denunciations) Declarations of property	543 553 569 574 579 582 582 583 584 587 590
2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15	Trivulzian codex of Rule Turlino edition of Rule Rule: Trivulzian codex and Turlino edition Ricordi (Counsels) Testamento (Legacies) Angela Merici's act of election Angela Merici's obituary notice Transcription of Angela Merici's petition. Letter of the Grand Penitentiary Office, rosary, discipline, hair-shirt: description Office, rosary, discipline, hair-shirt: donation. Ancient tomb of Saint Angela. "Rasse" (denunciations)	543 553 569 574 579 582 582 583 584 587 590 591 592
2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17	Trivulzian codex of Rule Turlino edition of Rule Rule: Trivulzian codex and Turlino edition Ricordi (Counsels) Testamento (Legacies) Angela Merici's act of election Angela Merici's obituary notice Transcription of Angela Merici's petition. Letter of the Grand Penitentiary Office, rosary, discipline, hair-shirt: description Office, rosary, discipline, hair-shirt: donation. Ancient tomb of Saint Angela. "Rasse" (denunciations) Declarations of property Extract from a letter of Fr Francesco Landini	543 553 569 574 579 582 583 584 587 590 591 592 593

19.	Executory mandate											611
20.	Executory process											612
21.	Authentication of the transcription of	f th	e l	Bul	١.						۸.	617
22.	Cozzano's Letter of comfort to the v	irgi	ns									618
23.	Cozzano's Reply											626
24.	Cozzano's Explanation of the Bull .											644
25.	Giacomo Tribesco's testimony											656
26.	Veronica Buzzi's act of election											657
27.	Notarial act of 22 February 1545											659
28.	Notarial act of 23 November 1555.											662
29.	Notarial act of 18 September 1556.											663
30.	Notarial act of 31 May 1558											664
31.	Notarial act of 31 July 1558			. 0								666
32.	Will of Ginevra Luzzago					٠						668
33.	Notarial act of 19 November 1559.											671
	Little Office of Saint Ursula											674
35.	Merician iconography at Desenzano a	ind	at	Ve	erc	n	a					678
36.	Merician iconography at Brescia				٠							683
37.	Summarium Additionale											688
Bib	oliography											697
Ind	lex											721

### **FOREWORD**

In 1535 Angela Merici founded at Brescia the Company of St Ursula. Its members observed the evangelical counsels without being bound by vows; they wore no particular habit; they did not lead a common life as in a monastic community, but lived with their own family and earned their own living. This initiative, aimed at inserting consecrated virgins into the world, introduced a feature of great innovation, as it took shape outside a monastery, in other words, outside the structure which for centuries had channelled religious life for women.

Angela Merici and her Company have aroused a lively interest, especially in the 20th century, and this has resulted in an extensive work of documentary research and studies undertaken by Cecylja Łubieńska, Paolo Guerrini, Antonio Cistellini, Battista Dassa and Teresa Ledóchowska. And now, in their turn, Luciana Mariani, Elisa Tarolli and Marie Seynaeve ponder reflectively on their spiritual mother, and devote to her this very rich volume, the fruit of many years'

indefatigable archive-research.

It is legitimate to ask what place the present research has within the whole framework of Merician historiography and what is its special significance. This volume is not meant to be a biography of Angela Merici, but to make a contribution towards one. With this aim in mind, the authors have made a very thorough archive-search, and as a result have discovered some new documents. This has led them to review critically the historiographical tradition, examining it in detail so as to discern what is historical, because based on sound, reliable sources, and what is derived from simple devotion or just a desire to eulogise. By re-reading the Merician documents already known, by studying them alongside other unpublished and untapped documents, and by comparing all this work very closely with the historiographical literature, the authors have reaped a rich harvest of precisions, rectifications, integrations, and acquired new and solid material.

It is impossible to go through all the intricate interweaving of this meticulous research. We just want to point out some of the many problems dealt with in the book so as to give an idea of its riches. Thanks to a systematic scrutiny of notarial deeds, of tax-registers and of libri provisionum, the authors present new elements about the Merici family (its composition and economic conditions), about Angela's youth, and about her circle of Brescian friends (Agostino Gallo, Giacomo Chizzola, Antonio Romano) who provided some very significant evidence during the informative process (commissioned in 1568 with an eventual beatification in mind

and drawn up by the lawyer, Giovanni Battista Nazari). The figure of Gabriele Cozzano stands out in this group, not only because he was a witness of the spiritual adventure of Angela Merici, but because he shared in it so passionately.

Relying, in fact, on the depositions of the "Processo Nazari" and on Cozzano's writings, the authors throw light on Angela's religious experience. This is seen as an experience entirely centred on interior renewal (the "lead a new life" of the 7th Counsel) and modelled on the life of the apostles and also of the virgins of the early Church, who were consecrated to Christ while remaining in the world. According to the authors, the title apostolic, which Cozzano applies to the life of Angela Merici, must really be understood in the sense which corresponds to the sequela Christi, such as it was carried out by the apostles, without reference to any kind of organised and systematic apostolate. The authors conclude from their research that Angela Merici played no specific role in any of the activity of the hospital organisations in Brescia - a theory put forward chiefly by Teresa Ledóchowska - because "none of her biographers, none of the contemporary witnesses, direct or indirect, no written source, no oral tradition, has put Angela in close contact with the works of charity organised in Brescia, such as hospitals and other 'luoghi pii'". Certainly Angela Merici carried out "good works" on behalf of her neighbour, but relying on the evidence of her contemporaries and early biographers, the authors are convinced that this did not involve her in activities directed towards looking after the sick in hospital or coming to the aid of women, especially the poor and those led astray, but rather with the works of mercy proper to the Christian life: settling family quarrels, resolving disputes, bringing comfort, giving counsel, shedding light.

After setting out the motives and the circumstances which led Angela to give

birth to her foundation, the authors examine its numerous components.

On the question of number, identity and social origin of Angela's first followers, only fragmentary and incomplete evidence has come to light, largely due to the loss of the register in which the names of the virgins had been inscribed from 25 November 1535, the day of the official foundation of the Company. Just as vague are the faces of the women who carried out the office of "colonelle", that is, local superiors, in the government of the Company. On the other hand, the "matron" governesses, those women belonging to the Brescian nobility, who have always been shadowy figures, now emerge from obscurity. It must not be forgotten that Angela Merici confided the government of the Company to women, reserving to four men the function of advisors in temporal matters. Well aware of treading on difficult ground, because of the dearth of documents known up to now, the authors have nevertheless carried out a very thorough research and discovered new facts, especially from executed deeds and fiscal returns.

After Angela Merici's death in 1540, the Company underwent a deep crisis, emerging from it with features changed from the original. It was opposed both by the ecclesiastical world, which looked with suspicion on such a new and original

experiment, and by the Brescian nobility, who regarded monasteries for women as institutions well suited for guaranteeing social stability by the fact that they welcomed, often without a vocation, women not destined for marriage. Gabriele Cozzano gives evidence of this hostility in a memoir of 1544-1546 (Risposta contro quelli persuadono la clausura alle vergini di S. Orsola). In it he describes as diabolic work the attempt to persuade Ursulines to enter a convent under the pretext of greater perfection. Although he speaks with respect of the monastic vocation, Cozzano defends the legitimacy of the new form of life, considering it to be

one path, among others, of reaching perfection.

But the Company was also torn by internal dissensions, such as the one caused by the introduction of the leather cincture as a visible sign of consecration. These dissensions lasted until 1558, and then the Company patched up its wounds and moved forward to new structures, passing from a phase which we would call charismatic to one that was institutional. This process of transformation is well documented by the comparison made between the Regola dictated by Angela Merici to Cozzano, which we do not have in the original but in the edition printed by Damiano Turlino in 1569, and the Regola "corrected" by Charles Borromeo at the time of his apostolic visit to Brescia in 1580. A comparative examination of the two texts, carried out with finesse by the authors, brings to light some significant differences on the spiritual level, and even more on the level of structures. The Company, in fact, now finds itself enclosed within a scrupulously defined structure: suffice it to recall Chapter 12 of the original Rule, entitled Del Governo, which is expanded to no less than ten chapters, all dealing with offices. The most striking aspect of this institutional phase appears very clearly in the chapter on obedience: docility to the action of the Holy Spirit, which in the Merician Rule is free and immediate, now has to pass through the filter of the spiritual father.

The comparison of the two Rules bears witness to the passage from a prophetic-charismatic vision to one of a counter-reforming type, in other words, distrust of interior inspirations, institutional inflexibility, stifling of the ascetical and mysti-

cal spirit, predominance of the juridical mentality.

Thanks also to the prestige of Cardinal Borromeo, the "corrected" Rule supplanted the authentic Rule of St Angela. It was not only adopted by the Company of Brescia, but also gave inspiration to many other Companies, as the authors clearly prove with well documented support. It is known that the Company of Brescia, restored in 1866 after the Napoleonic suppression through the initiative of Bishop Girolamo Verzeri and the two sisters, Maddalena and Elisabetta Girelli, adopted, while reducing and adapting it, the Borromean version of the Regola, which by then was thought to be the Regola of Angela Merici.

Of interest also is the reconstruction, never before attempted, of the various stages of the canonical processes for the beatification and canonisation of the Foundress. Retracing the tortuous paths of the canonical procedures, the authors go through every step of the development, and produce a rich harvest of information

about the methods and diffusion of the cult paid to Angela. They do the same with regard to the Bull of Paul III, Regimini Universalis Ecclesiae, of 9 June 1544. Their comments which accompany each stage of its iter throw light on the praxis of

the Roman Curia when documents of this kind were promulgated.

These are only some of the many problems, all of them worthy of consideration, which appear throughout the pages of this volume. Attention must also be drawn to the voluminous appendix which has been added, containing many unpublished documents. Of considerable interest is a manuscript of the Regola of Angela Merici, discovered in the Biblioteca Trivulziana of Milan, which the authors have traced back to the early months of 1546, thus making it the oldest manuscript of the Regola known today. This discovery adds value to the edition of the Regola published by Damiano Turlino in 1569, as there is practically no divergence between the two texts.

Since 1968, when Teresa Ledóchowska's biography was published, nothing substantially new had emerged by way of research on Angela Merici and the Company of St Ursula, but with the present work, a considerable step forward is taken. It is to be hoped that certain positions sustained by the authors will encourage further research, and also that the new avenues of approach suggested in the work will be tackled by future pioneers. An in-depth study could be made, for example, of the spirituality of Angela Merici, which Divo Barsotti has recently drawn attention to in some stimulating pages. There is still room, however, for further studies on this, with special reference to the spiritual currents of the 15th century and the first half of the 16th century. It would be good, likewise, to reconstruct, especially with research carried out at local level, the variegated panorama of Companies which sprang up in the 16th and 17th centuries, in numerous cities and villages of the Italian States, all laying claim to the Rule and the spirit of Angela Merici.

Massimo Marcocchi

## Introduction

## SAINT ANGELA MERICI IN HER TIME

An examination, no matter how cursory, of Merician history reveals at a glance the progress achieved by specialists over the last eighty years. From the simple narrative hagiography, which aims to edify by holding up for emulation the lives of holy people, advance has been made to so-called proper history, in the modern sense of the word, reconstructed with the scientific discipline of verification and documentation, such as is

expected by any reader today, whether lay or clerical.

Let us look, actually, at a path going from the Catholic Encyclopedia (1907) to the New Catholic Encyclopedia (1967), including also the Enciclopedia Cattolica (1948) and the various Biblioteche dei Santi (1956 and 1961), and not forgetting the Dizionario biografico degli Italiani (1961), where under its heading of "Angela", one can clearly see the merits of a modern and scientific methodology used in the study of St Angela's life. Likewise, one can appreciate the critical reading of episodes and their selection which gives due weight to material which can be verified and documented, without in any way denying the value of the oral accounts and local traditions which have formed part of the oldest heritage of written evidence, as well as graphic reproductions and figures, even though these are for the most part of questionable taste. We have come a long way from the style of early hagiographers and their successors in the 17th century. This traditional style of writing history did not always avoid the risk of including as "historical" what was only literary elaboration or material patently edifying, or even bordering on superstition, understandable though this may be.

There is already a striking difference between the articles on "Angela Merici" in the Catholic Encyclopedia (1907) and the New Catholic Encyclopedia (1967). The 1907 article gives traditional prominence to visions and miracles. Sixty years later we have a life which is substantially different and stripped of any material which cannot be documented according to modern criteria. Already in the Enciclopedia Cattolica of 1948, I, pp.1230-1, there is an account of the Saint's life without "hagiographical" detail, and the same can be said of the article in the Bibliotheca Sanctorum (1961), I, 1191-1195. Under the heading of "Angela Merici" in the Dizionario biografico degli Italiani (1961) it is worth noting that while room is made for the Saint's journeys, the conversion of the young, her educational vision and her service to her neighbour, there is no mention of visions and miracles.

The pages of the present volume, with their modern approach, can be placed within the context of this development in historical writing. Their purpose has not been to present a systematic biographical account in strict chronological order, but to make a contribution towards a biographical reconstruction. This has been made possible through the discovery of new documents by the authors during their patient research, and also by less weight being given to material of doubtful origin or of a purely devotional nature.

The historical framework covering the most eventful years of Angela's life is the period at Brescia, from 1516 to her death in 1540: she conceived and founded her Company between the years 1520-1540.

The geographical background to this history extends from Brescia to Venice, and along the western bank of Lake Garda; it reaches even as far as the Holy Land and then from Brescia to Rome, to Varallo, to Milan and to Cremona. But it is at Brescia that Angela spent the most fruitful years of her spiritual activity, in the very diocese where for some time there had been a call for a change of heart.

To begin with, it must be remembered that during the first thirty years of the 16th century events had overtaken Brescia which had dramatic and disastrous effects on political and civil life, with almost immediate repercussions on religious life. Wars, plundering and movements of foreign troops resulted in many deaths, aroused feelings of hatred and revenge, stirred up desires for power and spread a spirit of uncertainty and confusion.<sup>2</sup>

The pre-Tridentine clergy, still suffering from the plurality of benefices, sought refuge in a convenient absenteeism. Their mediocre intellectual training rendered them incapable of competing with the propagators of the new theories which were gradually spreading, even among the people themselves. Their spiritual and pastoral formation, so often left to personal initiative, did not always receive from the hierarchy the stimulus or support needed to enable them to carry out their sacerdotal ministry in a fitting manner. Urged on by private and family interests, the clergy often sought to acquire numerous benefices, as was the custom of the age, but this prevented them from being open to the urgent needs of the diocese.

Preaching was often entrusted to the mendicant Orders, especially

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> For the history of Brescia at this time, with reference to the period 1509-1516 cf. especially C. Pasero, Francia, Spagna, Impero a Brescia... Brescia, 1958; for a more general background there is Storia di Brescia, II, pp.443-6. Regarding the state of the diocese of Brescia, P. Guerrini, Le condizioni religiose di Brescia intorno alla metà del '500 in La Congregazione dei padri della pace, Brescia, 1933, and P. Tacchi Venturi, La vita religiosa in Italia, in Storia della Compagnia di Gesù... Roma, 1931. A summary is to be found in Cairns, Domenico Bollani... Nieuwkoop, 1976, p.149 et seq.

the Observants. Some of them, though, gained their reputation more through their talent as orators than through their doctrine, as was the case of Bernardino Ochino.<sup>3</sup>

It was also during this same period that Protestant ideas developed and spread in Italy, in the wake of Lutheranism. This often resulted in violent and unrestrained reaction, especially in a diocese such as Brescia, exposed as it was to ultramontane influences through its northern valleys.

In regions sufficiently removed from the capital this reaction could even degenerate into exaggerated forms of repression, thus giving a kind of "official" backing to demonstrations which led to the revival of medieval superstitious practices, as in the case of the witches of Valcamonica. These painful consequences of what was really negligence on the part of the clergy, constituted a wound which the pastoral visit of Bishop Bollani and the Tridentine decrees later had to try and heal.<sup>4</sup>

Thus, the sad coincidence between local superstition and the general indifference on the part of the ecclesiastical hierarchy was bound to lead to a lowering of the standard of religious life in the diocese. Where there was a lack of any real or effective *cura animarum* and where the celebration of the eucharistic sacrifice was just a "formality", left to priests who were generally poorly educated, it was only to be expected that the search for an alternative would lead, in part, to the spread of heretical ideas.

Before the experience of the Council of Trent was codified into Decrees and put into practice by a new generation of bishops, who were spurred on by the spirit of the Council and of its supporters in the dioceses, there is no doubt that one of the most striking reactions to the general state of decadence was the proliferation of new religious families.<sup>5</sup>

As we shall see, the most important "historical point" of this phenomenon was reached in the 1530's, and it was precisely during this

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Regarding the reputation of Ochino as a preacher cf. for example, sources quoted in D. FENLON, Heresy and Obedience in Tridentine Italy... Cambridge, 1972.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> ODORICI, Storie bresciane, Brescia, 1860, IX, p.130 et seq. For the pastoral visit of Bollani to Valcamonica cf. V. BONOMELLI, La Valcamonica della controriforma nelle visite del Vescovo Bollani, Brescia, 1978, and D. MONTANARI, Clero e società negli atti della visita pastorale... and A. MASETTI ZANNINI, Visita pastorale del vescovo Bollani..., both to be found in "Brixia Sacra", 1982, 30-67; 68-78.

The work to be consulted for a general outline on the subject, including the bibliography, is M. MARCOCCHI, La Riforma Cattolica, 2 vols., Brescia, 1967-1970. In particular cf. Le congregazioni riformate degli ordini monastici: aspetti istituzionali e testimonianze ascetico-mistiche and La riforma personale: nuovi ordini e nuove istituzioni, I, 63-197, 197-354. For the interpretation of the historical importance of the new orders, also cf. H.O. EVENETT, The New Orders in New Cambridge Modern History, II, 275-300, and likewise, The Spirit of the Counter Reformation, Cambridge, 1968.

period of Brescian religious life that the life and apostolate of Angela Merici were inserted. It was also precisely in her spirit of renewal (together with that of like-minded people) that the Catholic Reformation was foreshadowed. This reform movement came into being, not so much as "counter-reform" in reaction to the movements taking place north of the Alps, but rather as ferment of a new way of life aimed at restoring religious practice, with the accent being put on works of charity: the care of the sick, help for orphans, the fight against vice and, although less obvious but no less valid from the socio-religious point of view, the unobtrusive and valuable penetration of a renewed Christian spirit, spreading through all the different levels of society. A religious as well as a social movement, it would be looked upon as running parallel with the one on the other side of the Alps.

In fact, the concept of the need for the "work of mercy", itself the fruit of an inner inspiration which at times would take shape outside the official hierarchy of the Church, gave rise to a whole series of "private" initiatives ("private" at least at the beginning) which tried to come to grips with the moral, social and spiritual renewal so urgently needed in

that society.6

The extraordinary "historical coincidence" of so many of these initiatives taking place in different parts of Italy between 1530 and 1540 would seem to point to a deep-rooted malaise in European society on

both sides of the Alps.

Another "historical coincidence" concerns the foundation of the Company of St Ursula in 1535 and that of the Company of Jesus in 1540, with only five years' difference between them. Their subsequent development indicates clearly how extremely important the new religious institutions were in pre-Tridentine Catholic Europe, in their attempt to meet the needs of the masses who were just awakening to the new conception of life introduced by the Renaissance.<sup>7</sup>

The connection between Angela Merici's activity and similar enterprises lay in the fact that they all responded to social needs through the spontaneous and "private" initiatives of people who allowed themselves to be guided by the Spirit. These people discovered the fulfilment of their vocation either by founding charitable works or by an "aggiornamento" of old institutions, or even by establishing new forms, and all these works were just as likely to be set up outside existing ecclesiastical structures as within them.

<sup>7</sup> TACCHI VENTURI, loc. cit.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> For example, EVENETT, New Cambridge Modern History, loc. cit.

There are some well-known examples: Paolo Giustiniani and Pietro Quirini reformed the Camaldolese according to the spirit of the time, and as Giustiniani was a friend of Cajetan of Thiene, of Carafa and of the future Paul III, this initiative would have many repercussions later at the highest administrative level of the Church. Giustiniani and Quirini also tried to enlist Gaspare Contarini, who was to play such a leading role in the Catholic Reformation.

As for the Capuchins, they wanted to return to their sources by putting into practice again the primitive Rule of St Francis ad litteram sine glossa. This calls to mind the example of Matteo da Bascio who, as a result of what he had experienced during the plague-ridden years of the 1520's, dreamt of a radical return to all that was most authentic in the

Franciscan spirit and of organising charitable works.

Even if the flight of Ochino to Geneva in 1542 carried the "threat" of Protestantism right to the heart of Italian Catholicism, the fact remains that it was the Capuchins more than any others, apart from the Observants, who embodied a new ideal of evangelical practice, in marked contrast to the image of the moral decadence of friars and nuns given in classical and secular literature (from the *Decamerone* of Boccaccio to the *Sei Giornate* of Aretino).

The Theatines, who were both chronologically and geographically close to Angela Merici, also worked for Catholic reform. They had been founded in 1524 by Cajetan of Thiene and Gian Pietro Carafa, who were guided by God's Spirit and belonged to the fraternity of "Divino Amore". In kindred spirit with the Capuchins, the Theatines also renounced material goods and devoted themselves to charitable works, giving their services free and attending the most needy. Avoiding any official position within the existing welfare structures, they preached, visited hospitals, heard confessions and helped the poor and the sick, while at the same time giving their support to the preparations for liturgical reform.

The Barnabites in Cremona under the leadership of Antonio Maria Zaccaria and the Somaschans in the region of Bergamo under Jerome Emiliani were geographically even nearer to Angela Merici. In both of them we can catch a glimpse of the "social" motive underlying their charitable efforts to relieve and alleviate in some way the dire consequences of wars, poverty and sickness.

The Barnabites, founded at Milan in 1530, devoted themselves at the beginning to pastoral activity and to the ministry. The Somaschans

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> The anthology of MARCOCCHI gives us examples of *rules* and *constitutions* as well as other documents of the period connected with these and other contemporary movements. For the Theatines, see also P. PASCHINI, S. Gaetano Thiene, G.P. Carafa e le origini..., Rome, 1926.

came into being about 1533 in Somasca, near Bergamo, with the aim of carrying out pastoral action and effective charitable work (as witnessed by their work on behalf of orphans). They all received their formation

during the plague years.

Thus, round about 1535 (the year of St Angela's original foundation at Brescia), in response to the specific needs of a society afflicted by so many ills, a number of "spontaneous" initiatives, both religious and social, were launched in different places and circumstances. Their initiators may sometimes have been in contact, but for the most part they did not know each other. Taken as a whole, however, their efforts were an effective reply to a twofold need: first, to combat the religious decadence resulting from an ecclesiastical structure which needed a complete overhaul, and secondly, to restore the general confidence which had been sapped by so much political and social upheaval.

Angela Merici carried out her courageous foundation in 1535 when she was already more than sixty years old, and almost twenty of these had been spent in the social and religious setting of Brescia. A year later her Rule was approved by the ordinary. It might be useful to record

some of the events of these two historic years.

The Capuchins had their way of life codified in the Constitutions of 1535-1536, and the first mention of the "new" Capuchins appeared in a pontifical document of 1535. During their first elections, which took place in the same year, Bernardino d'Asti was made leader of the Order.

The Barnabites, who had already received approbation in a Brief from Clement VII in 1533, had this confirmed by Paul III in 1535. The Theatines likewise were confirmed by Paul III in 1536, after having been

approved by Clement VII in 1533.

It is within this historical framework, the period between the foundation of similar structures and their approval, that the events covering Angela's new foundation at Brescia took place. We must look now at the Brescian "background" and compare Angela with other contemporary figures, that is from a kind of "latitudinal" aspect; and at the same time, from the "longitudinal" aspect, her initiative and Rule must be set against the "Tridentine" structures of the time of Charles Borromeo.

Within the general context of the history of women, Angela is certainly not an isolated figure. During this period, in fact, there were a number of women who tried to find some kind of adequate solution to the needs of society. Some of them founded institutions or initiated enterprises which were not altogether unlike Angela's own life and work. It is well-nigh impossible, though, to confirm whether there was any mutual contact or influence between them, as the historical evidence of any such contacts is flimsy and practically non-existent. It is known, for

example, that Stefana Quinzani (1457-1530) and Osanna Andreasi (1449-1505) lived during this same period of Brescian religious history, as well as Laura Mignani (1480-1525), who was on friendly terms with some distinguished members of the "Divino Amore". They, too, tried to respond

to what was so clearly lacking in society.

These women were outstanding for their keen sense of social responsibility, for their piety, and their burning zeal for religious and moral reform. At the same time, other women, such as Veronica Gambara (1485-1550), Vittoria Colonna (1490-1547), Gaspara Stampa (1523-1554) and Giulia Gonzaga (1513-1566) were distinguishing themselves by their civic and secular gifts. And both groups were equally praised. Indeed, Ariosto, in his own literary style, had just paid homage to the civic qualities and "feminine" determination of these lay-women in the heroines portrayed in his Orlando Furioso (apparently another "historical coincidence" of the 1530's). Similarly, the religious and social virtues of some of the eminent women belonging to the Catholic society of this period were extolled in a contemporary distinctive style, namely that of the elaborate hagiographical and literary writings of 16th-17th century authors. Only too often, though, the simple and unvarnished historical evidence collected from eve-witnesses was submerged beneath a welter of marvels and wonders, of visions and miracles, of high flown eloquence and exhortation. This kind of literary glorification aimed at raising these figures above earthly reality, often deemed too modest, and placing them on a religious pedestal, vaguely Petrarchan in style, just as popular literature of the period had so often portrayed medieval saints lifted up from the earth and transfigured in divine ecstasy.

In the case of Angela, although there are only a few contacts which can be verified, they highlight her great reserve. She went to venerate the tomb of Osanna Andreasi and we know (or think we know) that she visited Stefana Quinzani when the latter was ill, but historical evidence does not support any further deduction. In an age when letter-writing was the most common form of communication, Angela does not seem to have corresponded with any of the leading women in the region of Brescia; certainly, up to now, no correspondence between her and any notable contemporaries has come to light.

Thus, it has not been possible to establish with any certainty a link, even a simple acquaintance, between Angela Merici and the other "pri-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> I have in mind here the early editions of *Orlando Furioso* (1516-1532). For the role of women in contemporary literature and writings, see for example, AA.VV., *Images de la femme dans la littérature italienne de la Renaissance*, Paris, (Centre de recherches sur la Renaissance), VIII, 1980, and the volume of M. ZANCAN, *Nel cerchio della luna: figure di donna in alcuni testi del XVI secolo*, Venice, 1983.

vate" reformers of the 1530's, who later would become the pillars of the Tridentine Catholic Reformation. This in no way diminishes her stature. On the contrary, her personality acquires greater depth and the essentially "private" nature of her enterprise stands out all the more, precisely because of the courage she displayed in proposing such a new way of life. In her activity on behalf of young girls and unmarried women the Foundress enlisted the help, in a very concrete way, of some widows belonging to the Brescian nobility and ruling class (as has been proved by certain documents of private law discovered by the authors). But the Company was only really established on 25 November, 1535, with the first official admission of a group of virgins. <sup>10</sup>

Let us now examine what I have called the "longitudinal" aspect; in other words, let us look at the original plan of the Company as it appeared in 1535, with regard to the changes introduced or approved by

Charles Borromeo after the Council of Trent.

Thanks to the testimony of Gabriele Cozzano, Angela's secretary-chancellor, it is easy enough to reconstruct the main outlines of her plan, as he laid great stress on the originality of her foundation. In an age when women were looked down upon, especially those who were without the protection of a husband or a convent grille, the members of the Company of St Ursula undertook to live out their consecration to God while remaining in the midst of society, thereby exposing themselves to all the risks, (including the not inconsiderable economic ones), inherent in such an anomalous situation. Such a "rule of life" was bound to lead to a certain emancipation of women, and it was this which made Angela's idea so "revolutionary".

The Rule of Angela Merici did not place the Company under the protection of the bishop, but in 1582 Charles Borromeo, at the time of his apostolic visit to Brescia, referring to the Council of Trent, bestowed the title of "father, pastor and superior" of the Company on the bishop, although the duties were vaguely defined and were delegated to one of his ecclesiastical vicars.

Angela had obviously asked of her daughters obedience to the different levels of authority, arranged in hierarchical order (the Church, the bishop, the spiritual father, the superiors of the Company, the legitimate superiors of the house, civil laws and authority); furthermore, in her own inner freedom, she did not hesitate also to demand obedience above all to the Holy Spirit. It is true that she stressed that it was only if one worked unceasingly at inner purity that the Spirit's voice could be fully

<sup>10</sup> I refer to Pt.II, Ch.III infra.

understood; nevertheless, it was always a question of listening directly to the Holy Spirit, on whose guidance one would rely for action.

This freedom of spirit seemed daring and much too risky to Cardinal Borromeo, and so it was moderated, restricted and submitted to the

judgment of the spiritual father.11

A comparison of these two attitudes reveals, in a nutshell, the complex history of the Catholic Reformation in its two principal stages. Firstly, there is the birth of a work whose spiritual and mystical roots originate in the charisma and saintly personality of the Foundress, and which grows from below, as it were, without being organised or encouraged by the hierarchy. Then the ecclesiastical authority intervenes to take over or to have a hand in the structures of the institution, sometimes even modifying its exterior shape.

This type of evolution, imposed from outside, which is what happened in the case of Angela Merici's foundation, is typical of the in-

fluence exercised by the Council of Trent.

The situation when the Company of St Ursula began reflects the general religious atmosphere of the 1530's. Numerous initiatives undertaken during this decade had certain characteristics in common: mysticism, saintliness, a religious respect for the human person (meaning here women), an initial independence vis-à-vis ecclesiastical authority (although accepting and recognising its role). The Tridentine and Borromean period which followed, however, wanted to bring everything under the control of episcopal authority and jurisdiction, in line with the directives regarding the duties of a bishop laid down by the Council of Trent.

Thus, after the Council of Trent, hierarchical structures tended to prevail over the free expression of charismatic action. "Liberated" women (in the Renaissance sense of the word) would find themselves once again under increasing "control" and "protected" by more and more restrictions and rules. This provided greater security, so it could be said; it gave better safeguard to the charism itself and responded more adequately to the needs of the age, when the closing stages of the century were witnessing the decline of Renaissance humanism. Certainly less emphasis was given then to the sanctity of the Foundress and to the mystical aspect of Angela Merici's foundation, in so far as it was the fruit

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> St Angela's text says: "And above all, obey the counsels and inspirations which the Holy Spirit unceasingly sends into our hearts. We shall distinguish his voice more clearly in the measure in which our conscience is purified and spotless". *Rule*: Chapter on Obedience. In the 1582 *Rule*, in the same chapter we read: "In addition to this (the hierarchy of authorities indicated above), to the interior inspirations, which through the judgment and approval of the spiritual father they will know to have come from the Holy Spirit".

of miraculous experience and, according to tradition, of God's direct intervention.

All this must be compared also with parallel developments in 16th century religious history and even with secular history. Such men as Borromeo in Milan and Bollani in Brescia had to muster all their energies in the fight against the pre-Tridentine power of the Canons. Tax-exemption and non-dependency on ecclesiastical structures caused numerous difficulties during the period of diocesan reform, as for example, Gambara's opposition to Bollani when the latter was bishop. <sup>13</sup>

It is interesting to note that St Angela had foreseen future changes and developments in the history of the Company of St Ursula, and had herself made allowance for structural changes.<sup>14</sup> But it is clear that she had not envisaged the full scale of the changes which would follow the Council of Trent and eventually give rise to the Order of St Ursula in the 17th century.

The Company started as a secular institution, which by claiming for voluntary celibacy the dignity of a recognised way of life, helped to promote the role of women. They found themselves committed to reforming their own social milieu, by the mere fact of their presence and the witness of their consecrated life. But already by the time of Borromeo, the Company at Brescia had become less secular and had even adopted a uniform religious dress. In France it would later be transformed into a religious Order, with enclosure and solemn vows (the form in which it would spread throughout the world), without giving up, however, direct apostolic work in society.

Thus, some of the somewhat "revolutionary" aspects of the original foundation would be codified, regularised, "normalised" (and therefore, let it be said, to a certain extent "deformed") by the logic and demands of a papacy undergoing renewal, by a reinvigorated episcopacy and by the new hierarchical organisation of the post-Tridentine Church.

In spite of all this, as Evenett has noted, Angela's brilliant inspiration which took shape as an institution of "private" origin, free from hierarchical jurisdiction and with structures sufficiently "flexible" so that it could work freely in society, would later bequeath a legacy of considerable benefit to the Church and to society itself.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Cf. the comparison in CAIRNS, op. cit., pp.166-170.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Cf. EVENETT, NCMH, op. cit., p.290.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> In the last *Legacy* of her *Testament* Angela had dictated: "And if, according to times and needs, new rules should be made or any change introduced, do it prudently and with good advice."
<sup>15</sup> For the various stages of the Catholic Reformation cf. the very perceptive article by I. CERVELLI,

For the various stages of the Catholic Reformation cf. the very perceptive article by I. CERVELLI, Storiografia e problemi intorno alla vita religiosa e spirituale a Venezia nella prima metà del'500, in Studi Ve-

The last context, but certainly not the least, in which Angela's life and foundation must be considered is that of religious ideas. With eyes still fixed on Brescia, there is perhaps another link (or coincidence) which deserves careful attention. The most decisive historical moment for the Ursulines was precisely 1535, the year when Angela founded the Company, when her charismatic intuition, with all its social implications, became for the first time an "institution". This "moment" coincided exactly with the last period, in the religious field, of any freedom of thought, of any exchange of ideas, of any "experimental" works. In other words, this was the period just before the Catholic Reformation entered its militant stage, beginning in 1542, when Carafa became head of the Holy Inquisition. Erasmus died in the year following 1535.

In 1531 two distinguished Brescians (one of them was Chancellor of the city) had written to the great Dutch humanist about their intention to publish in Italian his *Enchiridion*. <sup>16</sup> This translation by Emili appeared in the same year and was so successful that a second edition came out in 1540.

Now calling to mind the aspect which was perhaps the most innovative of Angela's conception for that period (a life of consecration with its ideal of presence and service *in society*, and not in a monastery), it is interesting to note that one of Erasmus' most provocative ideas is to be found in *Enchiridion*, namely *monachatus non est pietas*, which was an attack against the formalism into which exterior practices in religious life had sometimes deteriorated. This phrase would cause quite a stir in religious and cultural circles in later years.<sup>17</sup>

neziani, VIII, 1966. I discuss the role of Venice in the Catholic Reformation, from the Sack of Rome to the Council of Trent, in my work *Domenico Bollani... op. cit.* In my *Pietro Aretino...*, Florence, 1985, I have given some views about the importance of Erasmus' influence in Italy, but special reference should be made to the forth-coming study of S. Seidel-Menchi. Erasmus died in 1536.

<sup>16</sup> For this episode see P. GUERRINI, Due amici bresciani di Erasmo da Rotterdam: E.Emilii, V.Maggi in "Archivio Storico Lombardo", 1923, 172-180, and also Le carte Emigli della Biblioteca Queriniana di Brescia, in "Rivista araldica", 1922.

<sup>17</sup> The text of Erasmus says: "Monasticism is not piety, but a way of living, either useful or useless in proportion to one's moral and physical disposition. For my part, I neither urge you into it nor dissuade you from it. This only I suggest: that you define holiness not by what you eat, by ritual, or by any visible object, but by these principles we have been discussing. In whatever things you find the true likeness of Christ, join yourself to these things." ERASMUS, *Enchiridion Militis Christiani*, translated by Himelick, Indiana, 1963, pp.198-9.

However, one cannot pass over in silence the whole vast movement of reform which originated from below and reached so many different monasteries from the 15th century onwards. This movement flourished especially among the Congregations of Observants and was particularly effective in the territories belonging to the Republic of Venice cf. MARIO FOIS, L'"Osservanza" come espressione della "Ecclesia semper renovanda", in Problemi di Storia della Chiesa nei secoli XV-XVII, Edizioni Dehoniane, Napoli, 1979, pp.13-107; MARIO FOIS, I movimenti religiosi dell'Osservanza nel '400: i benedettini, in Riforma della Chiesa, Cultura e spiritualità nel Quattrocento veneto, Atti del convegno per il VI centenario

There is no document to prove the existence during these years of any kind of link between St Angela and the Erasmian circle at Brescia (the Emilii and Maggi families), but one thing must be noted, if only from the historical point of view. It was precisely during these years which interest us most, that Brescia became one of the most fertile centres for the spread of Erasmus' ideas (including those against enclosure). Nor must the fact be underestimated that it was during this decade (1531-1540) that the Company of St Ursula was founded and, both in the way it came into being and in its development, it formed an integral part of the early stages of the Catholic Reformation, when women were actively engaged in working at personal reform and at improving society, and this from within society itself.

One further point must be added to underline the link referred to above (tenuous though it may be and of historical interest only); it is curious to note that Vincenzo Maggi, who had been involved with Emilii in the Erasmian publication at Brescia, <sup>18</sup> wrote one of those innumerable treatises on the role of women in society. This was published in 1545, <sup>19</sup> almost as if he still had in mind a fresh image of St Angela, together with that of all the women who had helped her during her lifetime and all those who had been comforted, instructed and given spiritual guidance by her in such a tormented society.

Christopher Cairns

della nascita di Ludovico Barbo (1382-1443), Padova, Venezia, Treviso 19-24 September 1982, Cesena, Badia di S. Maria del Monte, 1984, pp.225-262.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. GUERRINI, Due amici bresciani..., op. cit., pp.175-8.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> VINCENZO MAGGI, Brieve trattato dell' Eccellentia delle donne..., Brescia, Damiano de Turlini, 1545. With reference to this work cf. C. Fahy in GSLI, 138, 1961, who at the same time, corrects some of the errors in Guerrini's work.

# Part I SOURCES

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# Chapter I DOCUMENTARY SOURCES

Anyone wanting to write a history of Angela Merici and the origins of the foundation of her Company of St Ursula in 1535 is faced with numerous difficulties when it comes to finding source material. First, the incursion of armies throughout the Italian Peninsula, then the suppression of religious associations by Napoleon, together with the two world wars of the 20th century – all this led to the dispersal of documentary and bibliographical material which would have been invaluable to the historiographer today. It must also be added that in many places existing documents are still being re-classified.

Our research, therefore, was arduous but nevertheless fruitful, because it allowed us to discover some extremely important documents, up to now completely unknown.

In this first chapter we will confine ourselves to presenting the documentary material which has provided the basis of the contribution we intend giving. For the first time, a major part of these documents has been explored from a Merician viewpoint and this has given us a whole wealth of hitherto unknown details about Angela Merici as a person, her social milieu and her institution.

The archive and bibliographical references have been grouped together according to their subject-interest, and are accompanied by notes giving the reasons for our selection and our method of approach.

In the following chapter we will deal with Merician historiography,

reducing it also to some basic lines.

### 1. DOCUMENTS FROM DESENZANO AND SALÒ

A native of Desenzano on her father's side, because he had settled a short time earlier along the banks of Lake Garda, and of Salò on her mother's side, then a resident in Brescia both through obedience and adoption, Angela Merici belongs to the region called "Venetian Lombardy". It was precisely at Desenzano and at Salò that we discovered in-

formation about Angela's family, while Brescia provided us with useful documentary evidence about the story of her foundation. Official documents will bear witness later to the cult that these three towns rendered her even before the Church beatified her.

#### a) Desenzano

With regard to Angela's family in the second half of the 15th century, the Archivio Antico Comunale of Desenzano (AACD) is certainly the richest source of all for evidence, some of which has never been explored up to now.

The material was rediscovered in March 1982, in premises belonging to Palazzo Todeschini at Desenzano, as indicated in a draft inventory which we were able to consult. It is in an excellent state of preservation

and is still in the process of being re-classified.

Some of the registers covering the period which is of particular interest to us are lost today, but in certain cases these gaps can be partly compensated for by registers of different series.

We gained a better knowledge of the Merici family from the useful information we found in the following registers which we examined:

- Libro I di tutte le Parti, Ordeni e Provvisioni del sp. Comune di Desenzano, dell'anno 1464 principiato. Manuscript on paper, leather-bound, consisting of 300 folios r-v. Cat.reg.n.32. It is a sufficiently detailed repertory of the decisions taken by the Municipal Council from 1464 onwards. The contents of the various meetings are listed according to subjects, with cross-references to different Libri delle Provvisioni (that is, the recorded minutes of the council meetings). The different headings of this kind of index follow no order at all. Mention is found here of Giovanni Merici's being "accepted into the Commune" (in other words, the citizenship of Desenzano was conferred on him).
- Libro delle Rasse. Manuscript on paper, bound in skin, consisting of 380 folios r-v which follow in correct order from ff.1-199, but then go

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> We were not able to find the origin of the word "rasse". There is the word "raza" meaning: frode, tristizia, inganno, astuzia, ribalderia, (fraud, villainy, deception, cunning, wickedness). Cf. GIOVAN BATTISTA MELCHIORI, Vocabolario Bresciano-Italiano con appendice e rettificazioni, Brescia, Dalla Tip. Franzoni e Socio, 1817: Anastatic reprint Brescia, 1972. We have kept the word as it was originally written. To check the accuracy of our transcription of the "rasse" and also to complete it, we turned to Prof. Alfio Rosario Natale of Milan University and former director of the State Archives in Milan, and to Mgr Antonio Masetti Zannini, Episcopal Archivist of Brescia and Episcopal Delegate for Ecclesiastical Archives. For the interpretation of certain words in the local dialect we were helped by Sig. Giuseppe Tosi of Desenzano, who also prepared the draft inventory of the AACD which we consulted.

back to 100 instead of 200. Cat.reg.n.40. It is the register of accusations and charges brought against the citizens of Desenzano, from January 1488 to August 1492. It lists the infringements, intentional or otherwise, of the standards of public behaviour set down by the Statutes of the Commune, together with the charges brought by the rural wardens of the peace regarding damages caused to private or public property. We know that the person was brought to trial when the fine imposed was indicated in the margin.<sup>2</sup>

This register is of great interest as it gives us a glimpse of everyday life in the country. Unfortunately, the registers immediately following are lost, thus making it difficult to provide a fuller reconstruction of some of the events which closely affected the domestic life of the Merici

family, such as one catches sight of from this existing register.

The systematic recording of "rasse" in a special *Libro* begins in 1488. Before this they were all jumbled up with council decisions, various elections and other public administrative acts in the *Libri Provisionum*; we consulted and found useful the following:

- Liber Provisionum D, cat.reg.n.4 today. Manuscript on paper, leather-bound, with 404 folios, it covers the period 1468-1472. It contains charges and accusations against citizens, records of auctions, lists of candidates elected to special functions, minutes of municipal council-meetings and of the general public "Vicìnia". A certain Carolus Merici appears here.
- Liber Provisionum E, cat.reg.n.5 today. Manuscript on paper, leather-bound, with 308 folios. It covers the period from 1 October 1476 to 25 July 1479. The contents are similar to those of the preceding. For the first time there is mention of Giovanni Merici and his wife.
- Liber Provisionum F, cat.reg.n.6 today. Manuscript on paper, leather-bound, with 251 folios (with recent pagination). It goes from November 1475 to July 1486, but also contains some "rasse" and some minutes for the meetings held during 1474. It has a composite structure and includes, inter alia, a separate section recording the army-expenses from November 1477 to April 1482.
- Liber Provisionum G, cat.reg.n.7 today. Manuscript on paper, leather-bound, with 273 folios. It covers the period from December 1481 to 31 March 1484. Contents as above, but with no army-expenses.
- Liber Provisionum H, cat.reg.n.8 today. Manuscript on paper, leather-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Cf. infra, Pt.II, Ch.I, 2.d.

<sup>3 &</sup>quot;Vicinia" cf. infra, Pt.II, Ch.I, 2.c.

bound, with 373 folios. The period covered is from January 1484 to 21 December 1487, with contents as above.

Unfortunately, the *Liber Provisionum* formerly indicated by the letter 'I' is missing, and this was the one which listed the granting of citizenship (of Desenzano) to Giovanni Merici, as can be inferred from the *Libro I di tutte le Parti...* mentioned above.

- Partitario 1°, cat.reg.n.45. Manuscript on paper, bound in skin, with 310 folio pages. It goes from 1501 to 1509. It contains the entry of some of the accounts, with debit and credit, which the citizens held vis-à-vis the Commune, arising from reciprocal duties and obligations. The headings for some of these go beyond 1509. The account of a Zuan de Merigo is to be found here.
- Partitario 2°, cat.reg.n.46. Manuscript on paper, bound in skin, with 308 folio pages. It covers the period 1507-1543. The contents are similar to those above. The record of Zuan de Merigo's account, which includes that of his son, continues here.
- Libro d'Estimo of 1523, today cat.reg.n.56. It is on paper, with 66 folios, in a hard-back cover. It contains the declarations of land-ownership for that particular year. At present, this land-register seems to be the only existing Libro d'Estimo for the whole of the 16th century. We discovered here, in two lines, the declaration about Angela's property.

The documentation listed so far gave us a picture, although only in broad outlines, of how the Merici family at Desenzano was composed, and enabled us to reconstruct in some degree its economic situation. The possible discovery in the future of other patrimonial declarations would help to add further details to the outline picture we have been able to provide.

We give a list below of other official registers. They contain items of information referring to the cult which the townsfolk had rendered Angela. They formed the subject of decisions taken by the Municipal Council, as will be shown especially in Pt.III. Ch.IV, which deals with the processes of beatification and canonisation of Angela Merici.

- Liber Ordinamentorum, 1599-1615, was formerly referred to by the letter 'Q' but is catalogued today as Qa, reg.n.12. It is a manuscript on paper, leather-bound and comprises 200 folios. It covers the period 19 December 1599 to 22 March 1615. It contains the recorded minutes of the general meetings held by the Municipal Council of Desenzano during this period. It is the only one surviving from the registers described in the Atti del Processo of beatification and canonisation.

These Atti del Processo,<sup>4</sup> in the minutes of the examination of witnesses in 1758, refer to the "Libris publicis pertinentibus ad spectabilem Communitatem huius oppidi Decentiani, qui asservantur in armario posito in Aula Concilii eiusdem Communitatis". This is followed by a list of four registers from which brief extracts were taken of some of the decisions relating to the cult of "beata Angela".

These Atti<sup>5</sup> quote the following: "librum in folio optime compactum, constantem ex foliis cartulatis tercentum octuaginta septem, coopertum corio coloris sub rubri, foris inscriptum littera P, qui quidem liber est ordinationum captarum a Concilio generali spect. Communitatis huius terrae atque exorditur ab anno 1577, desinitque in annum 1599".

(This book is lost today).

"Item alium librum pariter in folio rite compactum e constantem in foliis cartulatis tercentum, coopertum pariter eodem corio, foris inscriptum littera Q, qui est ordinationum ab anno 1599 usque ad annum 1615 captarum ab eodem Concilio Generali". (This is the actual register n.12 referred to above).

"Tertium librum itidem in folio, rite compactum, constantem ex foliis cartulatis tercentum, coopertum pariter corio, foris inscriptum litera R, qui est ordinationum ab anno 1615 usque ad annum 1626". (This

book is lost today).

"Quartum denique librum pariter in folio rite itidem compactum constantem ex foliis cartulatis biscentum nonaginta octo, coopertum eodem tegumento, inscriptum foris litera X, qui continet ordinationes captas ab anno 1655 usque ad annum 1665 a prefato Concilio generali eiusdem spectabilis Communitatis". (This book is lost today).

When the work of reorganisation is finished at the AACD, it may be possible to identify other documents whose existence is not known today or which are believed to have been lost.

# b) Salò

Merician tradition has always been unanimous in linking Angela Merici with the "Biancosis" of Salò on her mother's side. Moreover, Angela, after becoming an orphan, spent some years of her youth at Salò,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> The letters APC. Vat. or *Atti del Processo* refer to the handwritten volumes kept in the Vatican Secret Archives under the section: *S.Rit.C. Processus no.339-344. Brixien. Beatificationis et Canonizationis Angelae Mericiae.* They contain only the Acts of Process at diocesan level. The General Archives of the Ursulines of the Roman Union (Archivum Generale Ursulinarum Unionis Romanae – AGUUR) possess an authenticated copy in 8 volumes, classified AGUUR, B.1-8.

<sup>5</sup> APC. Vat. vol.340, f.406v.

during the last decade of the 15th century. Hence the importance, therefore, of an eventual exploration of the Archivio Antico Comunale of Salò (AACS). Even though we had to limit ourselves to a brief search, we managed to discover a piece of information concerning the civil status of the family which led to a correction of the family name traditionally given to Angela's mother, a surname which was adopted only later. This new element opens up a whole new path. Whoever wants to carry on the search at a deeper level will probably find information in this archive-material which, to our knowledge, has never been tapped or even read before from a Merician viewpoint. An inventory-list simply indicates the registers and files, all of which are in good condition. We would draw attention especially to the following:

- Liber Ordinamentorum n.8 (register n.18 on the inventory-list). Manuscript on paper, bound in skin, but the folios are unnumbered. It is the register of *Provvisioni*, in other words, of the decisions taken by the council between 1500 and 1516. The name often occurs here of "ser Blanchosius de Blanchis", who was, in all probability, the maternal uncle of Angela.
- Extimus MDXXIIII (register n.200 on the inventory-list). Manuscript on paper, with an ancient cardboard cover, 31.5 x 21.5cm, it comprises 147 folios which have been recently but not completely numbered (ff.1-93). It contains the declarations concerning landed property from all those listed as tax-payers at Salò in 1524. We discovered here the entry for the property of "ser Bartholomeus quondam ser Blanchosii de Blanchis", Angela's first cousin. This document, thanks to the information it gives about civil status, enabled us to identify the family name of Angela's mother.
- Catastico del Estimo Generale del anno 1578 (register n.201 on the inventory-list). Manuscript on paper, with an ancient cardboard cover, 30.5 x 21.5cm, it contains 179 folios with original numbering (ff.1-175). The declarations from the heirs of ser Bartolomeo Biancosi are to be found here.

Many gaps remain regarding Angela's stay at Salà. The few details we have on the subject are based on the testimony left by Giacomo Tribesco, Canon of the Lateran, towards the end of the 16th century. We found this testimony among the manuscript documents in the Biblioteca Queriniana of Brescia. We publish it as D25.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Cf. infra, Pt.II, Ch.I, 2.b.

#### 2. DOCUMENTATION FROM BRESCIA

From 1516 onwards, Angela spent the rest of her life at Brescia. She left there, it seems, only for pious reasons (pilgrimages) or for safety's sake (the stay at Cremona when there was the threat of danger from the imperial troops). Bellintani has also referred to her occasional visits to Salò. At Brescia, Angela immersed herself in the life of the city, as is proved by the contacts she had with the young women whom she would gather together into the Company of St Ursula, and also with the ladies of noble family to whom she would hand over the government of this Company in certain areas. At the same time she slipped quietly into the renewal movement which preceded the Council of Trent. Thus, we must now look at the question: In what form and in what setting did her activity take place?

Hence the need for a systematic search through all the important documents which have been collected at Brescia, notably at the Archivio di Stato and the Biblioteca Queriniana. Other searches which we carried out at the Archivio Vescovile and at the Archivio dei Filippini at Brescia also yielded results, and we will refer to the documents we consulted

there as our study proceeds.

The Brescian material covers a very extensive area. Largely on account of this and because it provides such a variety of information, we felt it would be better to treat the subject according to the different centres of interest and not to the places of origin. The reasons for the selec-

tion of material will become clearer as we go along.

Putting aside the documentary material relating to the historical events in which the Venetian Lombardy area in general, and the city of Brescia in particular, were involved, we aimed at focussing attention on three definite areas: the immediate circle round Angela, from the biographical point of view; the wider Merician circle, from the religious point of view; and the charitable works carried out in Brescia, in case Angela or her closest women-helpers should have taken some part in them.

We thought it advisable to leave to a later section of this chapter the archive-source material bearing more directly on Angela and the Company of St Ursula which she founded.

### a) Angela Merici's circle

The Merician historiographers have retained a few names, either those which were incorporated into written biographies from an oral tradition or those which appeared in documents of indisputable value, such as executed deeds and evidence given under oath. For the most part, though, it was just a question of names and not of real people. But to-day, these names have taken on flesh and blood. They have emerged from the vague mass of lists and come on to the Merician scene, each with a well-defined identity. The Biblioteca Queriniana and its Archivio Storico Civico (ASC) were our richest source of information in bringing these names to life again. The following manuscripts deserve mention:

- Polizze d'Estimo in ordine cronologico e in ordine alfabetico dall'anno 1517 al-l'anno 1687. This consists of 422 large cardboard folders divided into two sets, containing the individual sheets of declarations about property, from 1517 to 1687. They have been compiled according to a fixed plan: the head of the family first gives the names of the people under his charge (a kind of household statement), then comes the list of any property held in Brescia or outside the town, together with the declaration of any credits and debts. These declarations have been made at fairly regular intervals. We confined our study to those which were returned during the period which was of special interest to us, namely when the dates fixed for their return fell in 1517, 1534, 1548, 1565 or 1568, given a year or two here or there.

These sets of returns offer very useful clues when it comes to reconstructing the composition of households, their economic situation, business relationships and the identity of debtors and creditors. They also give some very precise references to the toponymy of that time because the location of landed property is given, as well as to its onomatology. Quite an interesting statistical survey could be drawn up from this material.

By going through these statements one by one, it is also possible to trace the evolution of family names. Surnames took time to become fixed and only took on a definitive form after dialectal inflexions or anything of a temporary nature had gradually been dropped. This precariousness in the formulation of family names, or the introduction into their sequence of names of a particular patronymic which, later on, was adopted to represent a special branch of the family, can make it very difficult at times to identify this or that surname.

The statements recur at fixed times, and thanks to the declaration they contain about the state of the family, they also show, especially in certain milieux, that only approximate ages are given. One has only to study the "polizza d'estimo" of Antonio Romano 8 to appreciate both the

8 Cf. infra, Pt.II, Ch.III, c.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> This will be indicated simply by PE.

valuable contribution these documents can make in throwing new light on civilian life, and their limitations.

- Libri Provisionum Civitatis Brixiae, for the period 1520-1540. These are registers on paper, in ancient binding, each folio numbered. Their ASC catalogue numbers are from 528 to 538. They contain the recorded minutes of the municipal council-meetings, and furnish information on the many facets of town life which came under discussion. Repeated lists of the members of the town council or of candidates for carrying out various public offices have made it easier to identify certain people.
- Registro di molte cose seguite, scritte da D. Pandolfo Nassino, nob. di Brescia. This is a manuscript on paper and is autographed. It has a recent parchment binding. It consists of 984 pages with recent pagination, alongside with the original folio-numbering. It measures 31.5 x 21.5cm. and is catalogued as ms.C.I.15. at the BQ. This old manuscript contains a rich miscellany of episodes relating to life in Brescia, set down in no order at all, but with the vividness, the fidelity and the good conscience of an eye-witness who is both perceptive and attentive to detail. However, this witness lacks the breadth of vision and the documentary support so necessary to ensure a certain objectivity. The items of news in his chronicle are commented on by personal remarks which are often very caustic, in a language influenced by the current Brescian and Venetian dialects. This journal is of local and of no special cultural interest, but it does contain a number of valuable transcriptions: some ancient Roman and Christian inscriptions and also some pertaining to the Venetian Government. In addition to the uncompleted obituary notice of Angela Merici, it contains other information which we made use of from time to time.

### b) The religious situation

It is probably difficult to understand the foundation of the Company of St Ursula, with all its repercussions on ecclesiastical circles in Brescia, without some knowledge of the social and religious situation at the beginning of the 16th century. However, we do not have to give specific attention to this subject, as it has already been dealt with by Prof. Cairns. Our task here is to point out the archive-material which provid-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> PANDOLFO NASSINO, born in 1486, died after 1544. For a more detailed account of the manuscript, cf. ANDREA VALENTINI, *Di Pandolfo Nassino, della sua Cronaca e di alcune lettere storiche in essa contenute*, in "Archivio Veneto" (Serie II), Vol.30, Pt.I, 1885. The extract in the BQ is classified SB.D.V.7m19. <sup>10</sup> Cf. supra, Introduction.

ed us with biographical detail of significant interest, both for the life of Angela and also for that of some of her early followers.

However, in the Biblioteca Queriniana we also examined works already well-known.

- FLORIANO CANALI, Hortulus Brixianae Sanctitatis; Collectore Venerab. D. Floriano Canali Brixiano Canonico Regulari S. Salvatoris in Monasterio S. Johannis de foris Brixiae. Manuscript on paper, with a recent parchment binding, measuring 28.5 x 19.5cm, catalogued ms.C.VI.28 in the BQ. This is not Canali's original work but only a copy, beautifully written, which Bernardino Faino arranged to be done, 11 as is vouched for by a note signed by Faino himself, which is attached to the last page (f.316) and could escape notice: "Hunc librum pro maiori parte fideli calamo ab originalibus exscripsit dominus Michelangelus de Ponte publicus scriba Brixiae, expensis et voluntate mei Bernardini Fayni presb. brixiani, quibus multa manu mea adijeci, ne tanta ad decorem Ecclesiae brixianae monimenta perirent, aut tempora consumarent".

Carlo Doneda 12 was still able to see the original in 1768. He describes it as "a miscellany of writings about Brescian Saints and Beatae collected by Fr Don Floriano Canale, Canon Regular of the Congregation of S. Salvadore, the fruit of much labour, which he left in his Presbytery Library of San Giovanni at Brescia. It is entitled: Collectiones miscellaneae factae per adm. R.P.D.Florianum Canalem Brix. Can. Reg. Cong. S. Salvatoris Ordinis S. Augustini. In Monasterio S. Joannis Evangelistae de foris Brixiae". 13 Following information given by Cecylja Łubieńska 14 we asked for a search to be made for the original copy of this "Miscellanea" in the National-Bibliotek in Vienna where it should be found. The manuscript section, however, is still being reorganised, and so it was not possible for us to track down this codex. Thus we do not know how faithful Faino's copy was to Canali's original work.

Canali's work is important to us as the Hortulus contains the testimony, vouched for in writing in 1591, by Don Giacomo Tribesco, Canon of St Afra, of what he remembered of his conversations with Angela Merici. Doneda had still been able to read this testimony on sheet 331 of the Collectiones Miscellaneae and had inserted a long extract from it in the Vita della B. Angela.15

<sup>11</sup> re BERNARDINO FAINO, cf. infra, Pt.I, Ch.II, 1.f.

<sup>12</sup> re CARLO DONEDA, cf. infra, Pt.I, Ch.II, 2.a.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> CARLO DONEDA, Vita della B. Angela Merici da Desenzano Fondatrice della Compagnia di Sant'Orsola, in Brescia, 1768. Dalle stampe di Giambattista Bossini. Cf. pp.9-10.

<sup>14</sup> MARIA CECYLIA ŁUBIEŃSKA zsu Dr. Fil., Święta Aniela Merici i jej Dzielo. I. Ojczyzna Świętej Anieli *i jej zycie*, Kraków, 1935, pp.XXIV-XXV, n.1.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. supra, note 13. DONEDA, *Vita, op. cit.*, pp.130-131, note 14.

The text which has been copied in the Hortulus bears the title: Gionta alle cose sopradette circa le meravigliose et divine virtù operate dalla Beata Seraffica Angela, and is to be found on f.243r-v.

– Di vari Santi Bresciani, manuscript on paper, with cardboard covers, 21 x 16cm, consisting of 44 folios. On the fly-leaf there is the title: "Indice delle cose contenute in questo libro estratte fedelmente da un libro ms. del Monasterio di S. Giovanni Evangelista di Brescia". It is catalogued D.VII.20.

This manuscript contains some biographies which must have been copied after 1591, as there is a reference to this date in it. It includes the following which are of interest to us: the "Vita e morte della B. Suor Angela" (ff.1-7), in other words the *Vita* written by Giovanni Battista Nazari; the obituary notice drawn up by Pandolfo Nassino (f.7v); the "Justificationi" by Nazari (ff.8-15v) and the testimony of Tribesco (ff.15v-16r). 16

There are, however, some graphic and linguistic variants in Nazari's writings in the manuscript when they are compared with the text which is preserved in the Acts of Process for Angela's canonisation,<sup>17</sup> and which is an authenticated copy of the original. They must have been copied, therefore, into ms.D.VII.20 from a text which was already corrupt, or slight alterations were made to bring the original terms into line with the spoken language.

It is the same for Nassino's page; it does not correspond with the handwritten original, which is easily legible in the Queriniana at Brescia,

but tallies with Canali's copy in his Hortulus.

Tribesco's testimony, on the other hand, when compared with the copy in the *Hortulus* and with Doneda's extract from the *Collectiones*, is clearly dependent on the latter.

Tribesco's document as given in the text of ms.D.VII.20 was published by Giuditta Bertolotti in 1923.<sup>18</sup> We publish it in our turn from

the same manuscript.19

– Bernardino Faino, Brescia Beata, nella quale si leggono cento e trenta Vite de più scielti Servi e Serve di Dio, di Beata e Veneranda Memoria: rilevati con questa Compositione alla perpetuità, per consolatione spirituale della Patria dalli molto Reverendi Signori Don Bernardino Faino prete bresciano, et Padre Benia-

19 D25.

 <sup>16</sup> re the *Vita* and the *Justificationi* of Nazari, cf. infra, Pt.I, Ch.II, 1.b. We publish these as documents
 17 and 16 (D17 and D16). For the obituary notice of Pandolfo Nassino, cf. supra, 2.a; infra, D7.
 17 re the *Atti del Processo*, cf. infra, 3.d.

<sup>18</sup> GIUDITTA BERTOLOTTI, Storia di S. Angela Merici Vergine Bresciana, Brescia, 1923, p.236.

mino Zacchi di S.T. Lettore Agostiniano dell'Osservanza di Lombardia, Brescia, Queriniana. ms.E.I. 2,3,4,5,6.

This manuscript work is in five volumes. Vols. 4,5,6 are in an old cardboard binding; vols. 2 and 3 have been bound recently in parchment. These last two are in a beautiful handwriting, quite likely by Faino himself, but the others are more like a rough copy as they are scattered with corrections. The work is dedicated "Alla Cesarea Maestà dell'Impe-

ratrice Margarita d'Austria".20

The life of Angela Merici and those of some of her spiritual daughters are to be found in the "Cento e trenta Vite". A number of other contemporary figures are also presented, and this helps sometimes to fill out in greater detail the kind of world in which Angela found herself living. From the scientific point of view, it is true that these "lives" can often raise many questions: absence of dates, no clear references to epochmaking events, and general vagueness about the sources used in each biography. On the other hand, they do sometimes yield a whole wealth of interesting biographical details, even if their aim is clearly to edify.

- Bernardino Faino, *Miscellanea*; manuscript on paper, with an ancient cardboard binding, 30.4 x 21.5cm, and with recent pagination; cata-

logued ms.K.VI.1. at the Queriniana.

In his role of deputy and then of superior of the Company of St Ursula, Faino must have felt that he had a special responsibility in making the Foundress known to others. So in preparation for a *Vita*, which he would later publish, he collected together any biographical details that he could find on the subject and searched among the documents kept in the Archives of the Company. He had been in contact with some Ursulines, certainly with those at Mons (in Belgium) and at Roermond (in the Netherlands), when they appealed to him for information about Angela and her institution.

These Miscellanea of Faino contain, in particular, the Processo fulminato for the execution of the Bull of Paul III (ff.85-92v); <sup>21</sup> a letter on the life of Angela signed by "Lucrezia Fisogni madre della Compagnia" (ff.93-101); the "Descrittione dell'oratorio, nel quale la Beata Madre Angela diede principio alla sua Compagnia di S. Orsola" (ff.[102-104r], originally 35-37); the description of the discipline and hair-shirt used by Angela, without any title, on f.[110r-v]; the "Note varie per la biografia di S. Angela Merici. Si risponde alli ponti proposti nelle lettere" (ff.[146r-150v], originally ff.9r-18v); the "Rescritto alle lettere dell'Ill.mo

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> BQ, ms.E.I.5.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. infra, Pt.III, Ch.I.

mons. Giovanni Blitterswik consegliero di Sua Maestà Catholica nel Consiglio Sovrano del Ducato di Gheldica, et della ven. madre Agnese della Natività, superiora delle Orsoline novamente introdotte in Ruremonda città della Fiandra" (f.[156r-v]); "Si risponde alli ponti proposti nelle lettere" (ff.[157r-165r]).

These pages were already known, even though they had never been published. They were followed by transcripts of memoirs: "Copiate le seguenti Memorie dal Registro Rosso della Compagnia di Sant'Orsola (f.166r-v); a short extract from the *Dichiarazione della Bolla* by Gabriele Cozzano (ff.[167-168]) and one from the *Epistola Confortatoria* by the same author (f.[168r-v]). Faino would make use of both the "Note varie" and the "Descrittione dell'oratorio" for his own *Vita* which he would publish in Bologna in 1672.

We will be making further references to Faino's writings as we go along. Certainly we will be careful not to overestimate him; indeed the reader is advised to exercise caution, as Faino lacks a certain critical sense. Nevertheless, he must be given credit for the tremendous effort he put into collecting together and passing on some very useful points of information. His good will and enthusiasm, unfortunately, were not sufficiently backed by the sketchy historical and literary learning he acquired late in life.

His vast output, with its varied comments, its short biographical notes and its transcriptions from many different sources, bears witness to a lively attention to the most varied aspects of ecclesiastical life as it really was at Brescia. To reconstruct them, Faino made good use of both oral tradition and written documents, but his work needs constant checking.

# c) Institutes of good works

We cannot ignore the urban social background of Brescia if we want to place Angela in a concrete setting or be able to perceive the possible resonances and consonances between her thinking and the richest trends of the reforming movements which were going on in the heart of society there. Now one of their most dynamic components was the work of the charitable and welfare institutes, and so we made a special study of the "luoghi pii" <sup>22</sup> to see whether we could find any trace of An-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> This was the name given to the welfare institutes which had usually been initiated by the Church and were largely maintained at public expense through legacies and gifts: hospitals, orphanages, "rescue" houses for fallen women, and special houses to care for young girls left alone or in moral danger. We have been able to give archive-references about the registers of these "luoghi pii" through the kind services of Dr Mariella Annibale Marchina of the State Archives of Brescia.

gela's direct involvement in them, or just simply of her presence, as well as of any relationship, obvious or hinted at, with the "Divino Amore" movement.

We will only point out here the documents of major interest, which can be found in the State Archives of Brescia, but they are still being rearranged and classified. For the most part this documentary material belongs to the "Deposito dell'Ospedale".

- Ospitale Maggiore: Bolle in pergamena, files AA-BB. These contain the original Bulls and Briefs granting various privileges to this hospital, which in the beginning was known as "Ospedale Grande". They cover the years 1507-1633.
- Ospitale Maggiore: Instrumenti, in parchment, files C,D,E. These files contain various acts relating to rents, donations and legacies bequeathed to this "luogo pio". File C covers the years 1460-1473; file D, 1474-1690; file E, 1544-1713.
- Liber Provisionum Hospitalis Magni Brixiae anno 1510 usque ad annum... Ospedale Maggiore Libro delle Provvisioni n.9. This consists of 288 folios with old numbering. Of interest to us is the information we discovered here about the juridical links existing between the Major Hospital and the Hospital for Incurables, and also the decisions taken by the Council of the Major Hospital regarding the financial contributions to be paid to the "luogo pio" for Incurables. (n.1 of the inventory: Giuseppe Bonelli, L'Archivio dell'Ospedale di Brescia, Notizie e inventari, Brescia, 1916).
- Ospedale Donne, Testamenti e Legati, File I. This covers the years 1525-1726. (Previously n.71 in Bonelli's inventory). Among these various documents, which are on separate sheets, there is the heading of one Act drawn up with the "luogo pio" of the Pietà, dated 9 September 1644, and the signing of a contract dated 29 September 1659. Both of these are in Bernardino Faino's handwriting.
- Repertorio Testamenti dell'Ospitale delle Donne, 1520, compito l'anno 1861. This is a large paper register, with a leather cover. It was compiled by the archivist Angelo Quaglia, as he himself attested (n.71 in Bonelli's inventory). We searched here for any trace of legacies bequeathed by the noble lady-governesses of the Company of St Ursula in favour of this hospital which had been founded for the Incurables, and then later converted into a women's hospital. Our search produced no appreciable results, especially as the repertory only gives the surnames of the benefactors.
- Libro primo delli Consigli Generali dal 1521 al 1661, classified as "Ospe-

dale Maggiore, Ospedale Incurabili (Donne)". On paper, parchment-bound, consisting of 170 folios, with old numbering (n.67 in Bonelli's inventory). It is the register of minutes of the council-meetings of the Hospital for Incurables. It should have recorded the origin, development and growth of this Brescian "luogo pio", together with its relations with the Major Hospital, but the minutes have not been written up continuously, so it is difficult to reconstruct the succession of the administrative acts and the nominations to different offices.

- Fondazione dell'Ospitale. Privilegi et altro, sin l'anno 1629. On paper, bound in skin, consisting of 80 folios, with old numbering (n.66 in Bonelli's inventory). This register gives documentary evidence about the land allocated to the Hospital for Incurables, with the inherent clauses; exemptions from duties and taxes, salt-allocations and the concession of the right to make collections on behalf of the hospital "SS.mae Trinitatis miserabilium nomine".
- Annali dell'Ospitale delli Incurabili di Brescia, Vol.1. From 1520-1799. On paper, bound in skin with 5 brass bosses; there are 336 pages, with original pagination (n.76 in Bonelli's inventory). It is a repertory of the chief decisions taken during the sessions of the City General Council, as well as those of the Major Hospital and the Hospital for Incurables. It also contains legacies, gifts, administrative business and tax-exemptions.
- Documenti fondazione Spedali Civili. Diplomatico vol.2º. This is a collection, in a large size cardboard cover, of original parchment and paper documents, and of copies of official acts (n.15 in Bonelli's inventory). In section 18, "Documenti di fondazione dell'Ospitale degli Incurabili ora delle Donne", there is a document, n.66, by Leo X, dated 31 December 1520, "granting to the city of Brescia the right to establish and build a hospital"; and document n.69, on parchment, is the decree of 29 March 1523, which links the Hospital for Incurables at Brescia with the one of S. Giacomo in Augusta at Rome. We also found here the Bull of Clement VII, dated 27 April 1526, which established the Confraternity "della SS.ma Trinità e della Carità per l'Ospedale degli Incurabili".
- Annali della Carità, Vol.1. The frontispiece bears the title: Annali del Ven.do Luogo Pio delle Convertite cioè della Carità, quali principiano dall' Anno 1532 e continuano fino al 17... This is a paper register, bound in skin, and consists of 124 folios with archive-numbering. It refers to events which took place between 1532-1820, but it was written later, at an unspecified date.

The writer of the historical section of these Annali was given the responsibility in the 18th century for putting the archives in order; he started with the "Istorietta" of this "Luogo Pio della Carità" for convert-

ed women, but stated that he did not have any of the documents about its origins, which explains several of the inaccuracies. He did not know about the existence of Paul III's Bull of 3 August 1535, addressed to the "Rectores hospitalis incurabilium Brixiensis" and "Laura de Gambara ac Helisabeth de Bargnanis <sup>23</sup> mulieres etiam Brixiensis", who took in the converted women and orphans.

Some other short chronicles follow, but this register is above all a summary of the decisions and administrative acts of the charitable institution set up by Laura Gambara for the salvation of fallen women who

had repented.

- Liber, 1530-1647, or "Strumenti della Carità". On paper, with the first sheet in parchment, bound in skin; there are 100 folios with archivenumbering. It contains signed deeds of purchases, the taking-up of long-term leases, and different kinds of transactions connected with the "Luogo Pio della Carità". This register belongs to the "Luogo Pio della Carità" and not to the "Deposito dell'Ospedale".
- Annali delle Orfanelle della Pietà di Brescia, tomo [the word "secondo" has been written but crossed out by pen], primo. On paper, bound in skin with five brass bosses, consisting of 325 pages with original numbering. It is a summary of various decisions, with some interesting references to disciplinary and administrative structures. It covers the period from 1562 to 1790.

The documentation presented in the second section of this chapter in no way covers all the archive-material we consulted over the years leading up to this publication. We have confined ourselves to the essential.

#### 3. SPECIFIC DOCUMENTATION

Archives source-material with a specific Merician content is in some ways quite extensive and already widely known. These documents have, as a matter of fact, made only a meagre contribution to the biography of Angela Merici, but they have provided a richer harvest when it comes to depicting the Saint's human and spiritual profile or to encouraging a rereading of her message.

Thus, with the aim of finding new material in order to reconstruct a more accurate and detailed historical study, as had been the case in the

<sup>23</sup> Cf. infra, Pt.II, Ch.III.g.

archives at Desenzano, Salò and Brescia, we extended our search to the following: Brescia: Archivio Diocesano, Archivio del Rev.mo Capitolo della Cattedrale; Milan: Archivio Storico Diocesano, Archivio di Stato, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Biblioteca Trivulziana; Venice: Archivio del Seminario Patriarcale; Bergamo: Biblioteca Civica; Vatican City: Archivio Segreto Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana; London: British Museum; Paris: (thanks to the research carried out by Marie-Paule Béjot osu) Bibliothèque Nationale, Bibliothèque Mazarine. Special attention, of course, was given to the Archives belonging to the Generalate House of the Ursulines of the Roman Union at Rome. We will go into more detail about some of this research in this chapter. As before, we will group together the different documents according to definite themes, corresponding with the periods and events in the story of Angela and of her institution.

### a) Writings of Angela Merici

Angela Merici did not write (it seems that she did not know how), but dictated her works to Gabriele Cozzano, her faithful secretary and chancellor of the Company. These works are three in number; usually they are known as "The Writings of St Angela", but their specific titles are: Regola, Ricordi, Testamento. They were meant to shape the life of the Company of St Ursula for whom they were intended, but over the centuries they have also guided the spirituality and become the pedagogic main-spring of the different branches of Ursulines (in convents or congregations) spread throughout the world.

### Regola

The first in date of these writings is certainly the Regola, written for all the members of the Company of St Ursula.

Up to now the search to recover, if not the original manuscript, at least the one approved by the diocesan authority, has proved vain. It would seem that all traces of it were lost during the Process of canonisation, in other words, after 1770. During the process-interrogation, in fact, the priest Antonio Guelfi, "president of the Public Library", affirmed that he had seen it.<sup>24</sup>

It is certain that a copy of the Regola was handed over to the Sacred Congregation of Rites, together with Angela's other writings and those

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> APC. Vat. 341, f.710r.

of Cozzano. This is known from the *Summarium Additionale*, which we publish as D37. These pages, up to now unknown, will be referred to in Pt.III, Ch.IV.

However, we discovered a text <sup>25</sup> which, in our opinion, is only a little later than the original one lost and which so far has not been known to writers of Merician history. This is the manuscript codex in the Biblioteca Trivulziana of Milan entitled:

- Regula della Compagnia de Santa Orsola. This is a paper manuscript with a parchment cover, 19.8 x 13.6cm. It consists of two blank folios plus two sections each with 8 folios, thereby making a total of 36 pages. The first four pages and the sixth are blank. It is catalogued: Codice 367, scaff.le n.82, palch.to n.2. It was originally numbered 342. Unpublished (cf. D1).

On p.[5] is the title and on pp.[7-13] there is a dedication "Al lettore". The index ("Indice delli capittoli della Regola") is on p.[14]. On p.[15], (that is, on the double p.1 on the right hand side, according to the original numbering with the number put at the top of each right hand page, starting with the first page), is the beginning of the text of the Rule. The "ex libris" on the cover carries the library coat-of-arms and the catalogue number. On the first blank sheet a small leaf r-v (15.7 x 9.3cm.) is attached with some notes of explanation, written in two different hands.

The Catalogo dei Codici manoscritti della Trivulziana, edited by Giulio Porro, describes this manuscript as follows: "16th century codex, on paper, in quarto. The Rule of the Company set out in this manuscript is the one drawn up by Bl. Angela Merici and later confirmed by the Bishop of Brescia on 8 August 1536 ...". The editor shows that he is unaware of the edition by Turlino because he adds: "I think the first edition of the Rule of the Ursulines is the one published at Brescia in 1582 by Pietro Maria Marchetti. There are a number of differences, though, between this printed text and the Trivulzian codex. Therefore, I think this manuscript text, both with regard to its writing and style, could well be anterior to 1536, and so I believe that this Rule is indeed the primitive one, which later would undergo various modifications". 26bis

<sup>26</sup> Catalogo dei Codici manoscritti della Trivulziana, edited by GIULIO PORRO, Vice-Presidente della R. Deputazione di Storia Patria, Torino, fratelli Bocca Librai di S.M., 1884, pp.371-372.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> With the help of Prof. Giovanna Colombo.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26bis</sup> "Codice cartaceo in 4º del Sec. XVI... La Regola della Compagnia di S. Orsola contenuta in questo codice è quella fatta dalla B. Angela Merici, la quale venne confermata dal Vescovo di Brescia agli 8 d'agosto 1536... Credo che la prima edizione fatta della Regola delle Orsoline sia quella di Brescia del 1582 presso Pietro Maria Marchetti. Ma fra il testo stampato e quello del codice trivulziano vi sono molte differenze. Credo perciò che questo manoscritto, avuto anche riguardo alla scrittura

This Regola is divided into a Prologue and 11 chapters, as was the one in force at the time of the chapter-meeting of the Company held on 18 March 1537, when it was presented to the notary.<sup>27</sup> The handwritten Rule which was sent to Rome for the Process of canonisation and which is described in the Summarium Additionale,<sup>28</sup> already referred to, likewise had a Prologue and 11 chapters.

Some textual particularities, however, lead us to think that this transcription could have been made between 11 December 1545 and 14

April 1546, or at least by 21 June of this same year.<sup>29</sup>

Catalogued together with this Regola are two others:

Regola generale per tutte quelle vergini della Compagnia di S. Orsola. Le quali si sono retirate a vivere in Congregatione. In Milano. Appresso Pacifico Pontio, MDLXXXV.

Le Regole de Monasteri delle Vergini di S. Orsola della città, et diocesi di Milano. Stampate di nuovo, et riconosciute. D'ordine dell'eminentissimo et reverendissimo Signor Cardinale Monti Arcivescovo di Milano. In Milano. Nella Stamperia Archiepiscopale MDCXLIII.

The first printed edition is:

- Regola della nova Compagnia di Santa Orsola di Brescia per la quale si vede come si habbiano a governar le vergini di detta Compagnia accioché vivendo christianamente possino doppo la lor morte fruir i beni di vita eterna. In Brescia by Damiano Turlino, undated. It consists of 16 unnumbered folios, 21 x 15.3cm.<sup>30</sup> [Rule of the new Company of St Ursula at Brescia, from which one can see how the virgins of this Company should conduct themselves, so that, living a Christian life, they can enjoy the fruits of eternal life after death]. This is the first edition to be printed, and at least three copies of it are known: at the Biblioteca Queriniana in Brescia (cat.EE.1.m.1); at the Biblioteca Vaticana (cat.Propaganda III.262-int.1); and at the British Museum in London (cat.4061.e.29/1). It can be dated as far back as 1569,<sup>31</sup> according to the handwritten note at the bottom of the frontis-

ed allo stile, possa essere anteriore al 1536, e per conseguenza che queste Regole siano le primitive, che subirono poi qualche cambiamento".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> This meeting was called to elect a legal representative for the Company. The act of election was copied into the APC from the authentic record of 18 March 1537. D6.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> Cf. infra, Pt.III, Ch.V, 1. GUERRINI, *S. Angela, op. cit.*, p.103, indicates that he knows about the existence of this Trivulzian codex, but he clearly could not have seen it as he makes no reference to its importance or its antiquity.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> TERESA LEDÓCHOWSKA, OSU. La data esatta della prima Regola della Compagnia di S. Orsola pubblicata a Brescia presso Damiano Turlino, in "Commentari dell'Ateneo di Brescia" for 1971, pp.131-135.

piece of the London copy: "Nell'anno 1569, come consta dal Libro de'

Conti nell'Archivio di S. Orsola di Brescia, fol.73 tergo".

This first edition fell into oblivion, the reasons for which will be given later,<sup>32</sup> and was only rediscovered in 1932, thanks to the copy found by Cecylja Łubieńska in the Queriniana. She published the text of it in the appendix to her work on St Angela, already referred to, with the translation opposite in Polish.

To Teresa Ledóchowska <sup>33</sup> must be given the credit of making the text of the Rule known to a wide reading public. She published it in 1968, inserting it into the appendix to Vol.I of her work. The Italian text was followed by a translation in the language in which the book was written, the same procedure being followed with subsequent translations of the book into different languages. Published separately in a booklet with the other Writings of St Angela, it became very well known, as these booklets spread throughout the countries of the world.

A copy of this Regola exists in an old manuscript codex entitled Secondo Libro Generale in the State Archives of Brescia, which will be dealt with in section c). It can be assumed that this copy, on the whole, has its

archetype in the edition by Damiano Turlino.

In 1936 Paolo Guerrini also published the same Regola in his "Memorie Storiche della Diocesi di Brescia", 34 but with less critical sense. Suffice it to quote from his introduction: "The text of the Rule which we publish in this chapter is the original primitive text, in its shorter form, such as was approved by the Vicar-General of Brescia ...". Guerrini does not indicate which of the two sources he had drawn upon, but it seems likely that, on the whole, he had taken it from the Secondo Libro Generale. Although we could perhaps forgive him for the use of the adjectives "primitive" and "original", with regard to the text of the Rule, it is not possible to accept the phrase "in its shorter form". As far as the Regola of St Angela is concerned, there exists only one form, and so the adjective "shorter" has no meaning.

This same text, translated into French, was published in 1947, in the appendix to a work by Mother Marie de St Jean Martin, L'Esprit de Ste Angèle. Thanks to the translation of this work into English, German,

33 TERESA LEDÓCHOWSKA, Angela Merici and the Company of St Ursula according to the historical documents, Rome-Milan, Ancora 1967, 2 vols; I. pp.265-275.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. infra, Pt.III, Ch.V.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> PAOLO GUERRINI, La Compagnia di S. Orsola dalle origini alla soppressione napoleonica (1535-1810) in S. Angela Merici e la Compagnia di S. Orsola nel IV Centenario della Fondazione. Miscellanea di studi di S. UNDSET, G. GAGGIA, P. GUERRINI, L. DENTELLA, Brescia, ed. Ancora, 1936, pp.90-101.

<sup>35</sup> MÈRE MARIE DE ST-JEAN MARTIN OSU, L'Esprit de Ste Angèle Merici, Rome, Maison Généralice de l'U.R. des Ursulines. Stampato coi tipi della Tip. Morcelliana, Brescia 1947. Appendix I, pp.643-657.

Dutch and Hungarian, it became widely known in the years that followed. In the Italian edition, the twelve chapters of the Regola were printed in the original language.

#### Ricordi - Testamento

These are the other two works, both very short, dictated by Angela to Gabriele Cozzano. The originals no longer exist, so we have had to take their description from the Acts of Process of Canonisation. The minutes of the examination held on 18 March 1772 record: "Successive comparuit coram antedictis reverendissimis dominis Iudicibus delegatis excellens dominus Franciscus Facconus iuris utriusque doctor, et hodiernus cancellarius Societatis Ursulinarum huius civitatis Brixiensis, et parendo literis monitorialibus sibi praesentatis, facto exhibuit, et penes acta dimisit... tres alios parvos libellos in 4°, eodem omnes vetusto charactere, ut apparet, conscriptos, et simili charta crassa coloris albi contectos. Porro alter ab extra inscriptus est: 'IHS. Testamento della Madre Suor Angela lassato alle Matrone'. Quod opusculum incipit 'Suor Angela serva indegna di Gesù Cristo' et desinit in haec verba 'supplicando Dio chel vi benedica: in nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti. Amen'. Alter hanc externam inscriptionem praefert: 'Arricordi, che vanno alli Colonelli'. Initialia opusculi verba sunt: 'Suor Angela indegna serva di Jesu Christo'; postrema vero: 'voglio, che siate benedette: in nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti. Amen'. Tertius intus habet huiusmodi titulum: 'Epistola Confortatoria... alle vergini della Compagnia di Sant'Orsola composta per il suo canceglier Gabriello Cozzano'...".36

The three manuscripts mentioned (the *Testamento* and *Ricordi* of Angela and Cozzano's *Epistola Confortatoria*), together with some others, were submitted to two calligraphy experts, Vincenzo Bighelli and Angelo Franchi, and each was asked "an habeat scientiam, et peritiam antiquorum characterum, et an unquam iudicialiter recognoverit scripturas aliquas saeculis praeteritis exaratas, an sciat insuper distinguere a quo tempore et de quo tempore tales antiquae scripturae fuerint exaratae, an

sint originales, et a quo, seu quibus conscriptae".37

Both arrived at the conclusion that the three manuscripts had been written by the same hand, but with regard to the contents, Bighelli stated explicitly that they were to be ascribed to two different authors. Basing their conclusion on the title on the frontispiece of the *Epistola*, the

<sup>36</sup> APC. Vat. 341, ff.867v-868r.

<sup>37</sup> APC. Vat. 341, f.877v.

two experts deduced that these were the originals of Gabriele Cozzano. And that is how they were copied down in the *Atti del Processo*.

- Arricordi che vanno alli Colonelli, or as they are more generally known, the Ricordi (Counsels). They are to be found in the APC. Vat. 341, ff.946v-953r. They consist of a Prologue and 9 Counsels (cf.D4). There is also a copy of them in the Secondo Libro Generale, but with slight alterations and changes in the style of language. The ancient form of spelling, which was much closer to the Brescian tongue, has often been replaced by more literary forms.
- Testamento della Madre Suor Angela, or as it is sometimes called, the Legati (Legacies). It is in the APC. Vat. 341, ff.953r-958v. It consists of a Prologue and 11 Legacies (cf.D5). The copy which is to be found in the Secondo Libro Generale is appreciably different and is closer to the first printed edition: Testamento della Reverenda Madre Suor Angela di Brescia, appresso gli Eredi di Damiano Turlino, Brescia, 1574. There is also a copy in the Biblioteca Vaticana, but the text of this edition differs from the original, and this time not only from the point of view of linguistic style. Legacies 9,10 and 11, in fact, have each been divided into two, so that the work ends up with a Prologue, 13 Legacies and a conclusion; but at the same time, these divisions and the way they have been joined together have led to a change in the original thought.

The Ricordi and Testamento have often been incorporated in or added as an appendix to the Rules of the Company of St Ursula and those of the Order of St Ursula, but uncritically. It is only in recent times that a stricter approach has been adopted in the publication of the Writings

and their translations into different languages.

With a view to making these works accessible to a wider reading public and their translations easier, they were published in 1975, in facsimile of the Regola published by Damiano Turlino and of the Ricordi and Testamento copied from the diocesan Process, with the corresponding translation into modern Italian on the opposite page.<sup>39</sup> This work of transposition took many years and was carried out under the authoritative direction of the late Prof. Giovanni Presa of the Catholic University of Milan and of Brescia, a specialist in the Brescian spoken language of the 16th century: S. Angela Merici, Regola Ricordi Legati. Testo antico e testo moderno, a cura di Luciana Mariani e di Elisa Tarolli. Introduzione di Ansgario Faller, Editrice Queriniana, Brescia, 1975.

38 B. Vat. Propaganda III.262.int.2.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> In 1976, the publishing firm Queriniana reprinted this as n.7 in its series "Spiritualità".

### b) Writings of Gabriele Cozzano

Gabriele Cozzano was not only St Angela's copyist and secretary, but also the chancellor and defender of the Merician conception of the Company of St Ursula. In situations still not sufficiently clarified and which sometimes became perhaps over-tense, he intervened with his writings, hoping to put a brake on a change which concrete circumstances and current difficulties probably rendered inevitable. It is to this period of crisis that the following works can be traced;

– Epistola Confortatoria alle Vergini della Compagnia di Sant'Orsola composta per il suo Canceglier Gabriello Cozzano.<sup>40</sup> The original of this is lost (cf.D22). The manuscript which was presented at the Process and recopied in the Atti del Processo carried the author's name. Vincenzo Bighelli, one of the calligraphy experts called in by the ecclesiastical tribunal, in fact declared: "It is necessary, however, to take note that in the third work [Epistola] the name of Gabriele Cozzano has been added in another hand, still in an ancient handwriting, but different in its lettering and ink, and also on account of the full-stop placed before the abovementioned name. This little addition, however, in no way detracts from the credibility so rightly deserved by these old monuments [documents], which have always been jealously preserved in the Archives of these Lady Ursulines of Brescia". <sup>41</sup>

When these three manuscripts, namely the Ricordi, Testamento, Epistola Confortatoria, were submitted for examination, Bighelli, after comparing them, declared: "... without any doubt ... they are more than two hundred years old; they are all written by the same hand although not all three are the work of the same author ...". As for the handwriting, the expert continued: "I declare that there must be no suspicion whatsoever that the characteristics of all three works are not those of his [Cozzano's] own authentic and original handwriting, especially if one takes into consideration, that in each of them, there is the same kind of phrasing, spelling and punctuation which belong more or less to the mid-16th century. At a later date the Italian style became refined, and one no longer comes across, especially in the writings of educated people, those enormous barbarisms which formerly used to sprinkle the pages so lavishly. My opinion is further strengthened by the corrections made by the author

40 APC. Vat. 341, ff.958v-969r.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup> Ibid. ff.880v-881r. "Deesi però notare essere stato nel terzo opuscolo il nome di Gabrielo Cozzano stato aggiunto da mano diversa, ma anch'essa però antica per la differenza del carattere, dell'inchiostro, e per la finale puntazione prima del nome sudetto. Questa piccola aggiunta non toglie però
un menomo grado di quella fede, che meritano questi antichi monumenti, i quali intesi, che sono
stati sempre custoditi gelosamente nell'archivio di queste signore Orsoline di Brescia".

himself and by the way in which he has done them. This reveals that these corrections were done partly during the actual writing of the work, and partly when the work was being checked by the writer". 41 bis

- Risposta contra quelli persuadono la clausura alle Vergini di Sant'Orsola. This is a manuscript on paper, with an ancient cardboard binding; 21 x 16cm, consisting of 52 folios with old numbering; it bears no author's name. It is catalogued ms.D.VII.8 at the Biblioteca Queriniana. (cf. D23).

Those in charge of the Apostolic Process could not have known about it, as they make no reference to it. The Process of canonisation held at the diocesan centre at Brescia ended on 13 February 1775, so the copy of any documents referring to Angela Merici had been completed by then. This manuscript, therefore, must have been found a little later, as Girolamo Lombardi refers to it in his *Vita della B. Angela*, published in 1778. He speaks of it as: "Handwritten book kept by the Filippini Fathers of Brescia <sup>43</sup>... written when the Company had not yet received confirmation from the Church, but just from a Vicar, as one can read here (on p.19)". <sup>44</sup>

Lombardi advances no theory about the name of the author, nor does he list the *Risposta* with the other two writings of Cozzano. The manuscript mentioned by him is no longer to be found in the Archives of the Filippini at Brescia. A lot of papers belonging to these Archives, however, were passed on to the Biblioteca Queriniana, so it is reasonable to ask whether the codex, catalogued ms.D.VII.8 at the Queriniana, is not the same as the one Lombardi knew about. Page 19 to which he refers corresponds at any rate. On the basis of a critical examination of the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41 bis</sup> "risolutamente... superano due secoli di antichità, e sono scritti della stessa mano, benché però tutti e tre non siano dello stesso Autore...". As for the writing, the expert continued: "pronuntio non doversi neppure sospettare che il carattere di tutti e tre non sia suo [del Cozzano] vero ed originale, attesa in ogniuno di essi la stessissima frase, ortografia ed interpunzione corrispondente alla metà incirca del secolo decimo sesto. Dopo quel tempo lo stile italiano si è ripulito, e non si leggono, massime negli scritti di persone dotte, quegli enormi barbarismi, de' quali communemente erano in addietro cosperse le carte a larga mano. Molto più mi assicurano nel mio giudizio le correzioni fatte dallo stesso scrittore in maniera la quale dà a divedere averle esso eseguite parte nell'atto stesso di comporre l'opera, e parte nel rileggerla".

<sup>42 &</sup>quot;Quelli persuadono" is an elliptical form of the relative phrase used at that time.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup> Founded by Fr Francesco Cabrini di Alfianello under the title of "Compagnia dei Preti Secolari di S. Maria della Pace", they joined up almost immediately with the "Preti dell'Oratorio" founded by St Philip Neri; hence their title "Filippini".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>44</sup> GIROLAMO LOMBARDI, *Vita della B. Angela Merici Fondatrice della Compagnia di Sant'Orsola*, scritta da Girolamo Lombardi sacerdote veronese, in Venezia, 1778. Dedicata a Sua Eccellenza il N.U. Gio. Francesco Pisani Procurator di S. Marco. Cf. p.113: "... Libro manoscritto, che conservasi presso i RR. Padri Filippini di Brescia ... scritto allorché la Compagnia non era confermata per anco dalla Chiesa, eccetto che da uno solo Vicario, come ivi si legge".

text itself, it is indeed possible to attribute its authorship to Cozzano.

Cecylja Łubieńska, who rediscovered this manuscript in the 1930's, also makes Gabriele Cozzano the author.<sup>45</sup>

The same position is taken by Teresa Ledóchowska who published the three works in full: 46 the *Risposta*, by copying the manuscript in the Biblioteca Queriniana; the *Epistola*, by drawing on Guerrini's work (who in his turn had relied on an apograph by Lodrini); 47 and the *Dichiarazione*, by going back to the signed copy by Giacomo da Ponte referred to in the *Atti del Processo*.

– Dichiarazione della Bolla del Papa Paolo III. The original of Cozzano is lost. According to the description contained in the Acts of Process, the small handwritten note-book, which was handed over to the ecclesiastical tribunal, had to be ascribed to "Giovanni Giacomo da Ponte, notary, expert in ancient handwriting, much employed at Brescia between 1660-1690 in copying old documents ... After studying the phrasing, spelling and style, however, I conclude that the aforesaid Dichiarazione belongs to the period of this Gabriele Cozzano. In my opinion it is completely trustworthy as I have discovered no defect in it or anything to prove the contrary". This was the judgment of Vincenzo Bighelli, the expert already mentioned above.

We publish the Dichiarazione as D24, taking it from the Atti del Processo di Canonizzazione.

We will try to place Cozzano's three works within the intricate and confused setting of the years which immediately followed Angela's death.

### c) Books of the Company

The Company of St Ursula at Brescia had its own books, registers and different documents which it guarded jealously in its own archives. This is attested by the Acts of Process, and also by serious authors such as Doneda and Lombardi.

With their help, we have tried to list them, in the appendix note of

<sup>45</sup> ŁUBIEŃSKA, Święta Aniela, op. cit., p.XXIV.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>46</sup> LEDÓCHOWSKA, Angela, op. cit., II: Risposta, pp.308-335; Epistola, pp.335-348; Dichiarazione, pp.349-368.

GUERRINI, La Compagnia. op. cit., pp.133-145.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>48</sup> APC. Vat. 341, f.881r. Transcription on ff.969r-983r. "Giovanni Giacomo da Ponte nodaro, e perito de' caratteri antichi, molto impiegato in Brescia nel trascrivere carte antiche circa gli anni 1660 al 1690... Dalla dicitura, ortografia e stile però deduco doversi attribuire ai tempi del sudetto Gabriele Cozzano la *Dichiarazione* predetta, ed è a mio credere degna di tutta la fede, non avendovi scoperto vizio alcuno, né presunzione in contrario".

Pt.III, Ch.I, restricting ourselves to Angela's century. These archives, unfortunately, suffered the common fate which befell all the other contemporary archives.

There remain only:

- Ordine et Ceremonie che si fanno con le Vergini che vogliono entrar nella Compagnia di S. Orsola di Brescia. In Brescia per Damiano Turlino.<sup>49</sup> This is a small undated book, consisting of 8 unnumbered folios, 21 x 15.3cm. Only three copies of it are known: at the Biblioteca Queriniana in Brescia (EE.1.m.2); at the Biblioteca Vaticana (Propaganda.III.262.int.3); and at the British Museum in London (4061.e.29/2). It is the first Ritual of the Company to be printed, and the printing and lay-out are identical with those in the Regola printed by Turlino. It could well belong to 1572, since mention is made of the list of charges which had definitely been fixed in the Company in 1572 (further reference will be made to this in Pt.III. Ch.III), but it could not be later, since in that same year D.Turlino has already been replaced by the "Heredes D.Turlini". This Ritual is an interesting document in helping to deepen our knowledge of Merician spirituality as it was understood by the Company.
- Secondo Libro Generale della Ven. Compagnia di S. Orsola di Brescia, che finisce l'anno 1632. Brescia, Archivio di Stato, Fondo di Religione, Cartella "Compagnia di S. Orsola", reg.134. It is a manuscript on paper, of infolio format, bound in maroon coloured leather, and consists of 305 numbered folios. Begun in 1572, as is proved by the decision taken on 28 October 1572 and entered on f.150r-v, it also provides information about some of the events which occurred after the date indicated in the title (e.g. on f.109v, the record of the ceremony of the crowning of virgins on 20 May 1674).

The Secondo Libro Generale was discovered about 1930 in the State Archives of Brescia, thanks to the persevering efforts of Mother Łubieńska,<sup>51</sup> with the help of Monsignor Paolo Guerrini.

This collection of documents concerning Angela Merici and the Company is the oldest we have, but the transcriptions include the usual variants due to copyists' errors and, in some cases, alterations, the key to which we do not possess. It contains the following important documents: the *Vita* of Nazari (ff.1r-6r); the *Processo Nazari* (ff.6v-11r); the

51 LUBIENSKA, Święta Aniela. op. cit., p.XVII.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>49</sup> Cf. infra, Pt.III, Ch.III, 1.c.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>50</sup> Cf. Evandrophilactus adversus Acesiam Cacodoxum, qui se falso Eudoxum Philalethem facit, antapologia, Brixiae, apud Heredes Damiani Turlini, 1572.

Regola followed by the Decrees connected with it (ff.11v-18v); the Rituale (ff.18v-21v); the Testamento (ff.22r-25v); the Ricordi (ff.26r-29r); Paul III's Bolla (ff.30v-31r); the Processo esecutoriale (ff.31v-34v); some lists of members with the various charges assigned to them from f.37r to f.50r, interspersed with blank sheets. On f.52 begins the section of the manuscript set aside for the record of the elections of the mothers general and it begins with the copy of the attested act of St Angela's election (ff.52r-53v), then of Veronica Buzzi's in 1555 (ff.54r-55r), Isabetta Prato's in 1572 (ff.55v-56r), Caterina Chizzola's in 1580 (ff.56v-57r) and of the generals who followed (ff.57v-68v). There are lists of those who took part in the elections, as well as of the members who joined after 1558, as indicated in the admission-records (ff. 100r-110r; 151r-183v; and ff. 280r et seq.); also lists of the members of government and of the spiritual fathers and confessors. In all these lists there are gaps in the names and even more in the dates, especially when it was a case of writing them in "a posteriori"; nevertheless, they open up very interesting paths of research about the social background of the people concerned, the criteria used in appointments and the methods of election, the expansion of the institute, etc.

One section of the in-folio had been intended for the recording of statutes or rules (ff.250r-272v). For one or other of these only the title has been given: "Qual sia l'officio del rev.do Padre generale della Compagnia", "Qual sia l'officio della Madre generale della Compagnia", "L'ufficio delle Collonelle". These are to be found respectively on ff.250, 252, 258, but the rest of the page has been left blank. There are also

blank pages dividing one title from another.

On the other hand the following are given in full: "L'ufficio delle Madonne deputate sopra ciascun collonello" (f.254r), "L'ufficio delle Maestre deputate sopra ciascun collonello, et quello che devono aricordar et insegnar alle vergini" (f.256r-v), "Modello circa il fare la congrega generale per tutto il governo della Compagnia di Santa Orsola" (f.270r-v), "Modello circa il fare le congreghe particolari di ciascun collonello" (f.272r-v). Judging from the number of blank folio-sheets left between one set of regulations and another, it looks as if subsequent additions or changes were expected.

The last page (f.305v) closes with the following note: "From the above-mentioned date [15 March 1632] to the beginning of the year 1634, when the new Libro Generale, which is the third one and follows on from the second, was started with the new government by the fathers general, nothing has been written, no measures or decisions recorded, even though they have been taken at meetings of the Government, and this is due to the negligence of the person who should have written them

### d) Documents of the Church

Under this heading we group together various official documents issued by the Church, at different levels of authority and with different aims in view. Over the centuries certain of these have sign-posted, as it were, important stages in the history of the Company of St Ursula.

- [Supplica], 2 November 1532. The copy of this is in Diversa Sacrae Penitentiariae Clementis PP. VII. Anno IX. 1532, reg.n.79 in the Vatican Secret Archives, which was kept in the past among the papers of the Sacred Apostolic Penitentiary. It is in the form of a register, with unnumbered folios.

Under the heading "Indultum pro moniali", dated 2 November 1532, there is a copy of Angela's petition to the Holy See asking to be dispensed from the obligation to be buried in a church served by the Franciscans. Nothing was known about this document up to now and we discovered it through the kindness of Mgr Filippo Tamburini of the Biblioteca Vaticana. It is published as D8.

The original of the Indult, in other words the letter of the Sacred Penitentiary in reply to this petition, giving its approval, is lost. We have drawn the text from a note in the *Vita* of Lombardi,<sup>52</sup> and we give it as D9.

- Bolla "Regimini universalis Ecclesiae", promulgated by Paul III on 9 June 1544. In the index of the secret Bulls of Paul III it is recorded as: "Pro Confraternitate Virginum sub invocatione Sanctae Ursulae Brixiensi privilegia".<sup>53</sup>

The transcription of it is in the Reg.Vat.1696 of the Vatican Secret Archives, ff.223r-225r [ancient numbering ff.387r-389r]. The original is lost today. At the time of Bernardino Faino, the Company of St Ursula at Brescia still kept it.<sup>54</sup> This is published as D18.

The original of the Supplica for this Bull, and the copy of it in the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>51</sup>bis "Dal di soprascritto [15 marzo 1632] sino al principio dell'Anno 1634, che poi col novo governo de Padri generali incomincia il novo libro Generale e Terzo, che succede a questo che è il 2º, non sono statte scritte Parti, né terminationi alcune, quantunque ne siano stà fatte nelle Congreg.ni dil Governo: et questo è proceduto dalla negligenza di chi doveva scrivere, overo far scrivere".

<sup>52</sup> LOMBARDI, Vita, op. cit., pp.132-133 n.(f).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>53</sup> Index Divers. et Secr. a Leone X ad Pium V 1513-1571. Archivio Segreto Vaticano, Indice 288, £264x [252x]

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>54</sup> Regola della Compagnia delle Vergini di Sant'Orsola di Brescia. La quale può servire anco ad altre Città, essendo meglio espressa, et ordinata per commodo e beneficio universale, Con la Vita della Madre Angela Merici sua fondatrice di beata memoria, in Bologna, 1672, per Gio. Recaldini, p.[10].

registers cannot be found. Katterbach draws attention to the fact that the registers containing these petitions for the secret Bulls of Paul III "no longer exist".<sup>55</sup>

- Bolla "Hodie a nobis", promulgated by Paul III also on 9 June 1544. It is the mandate to execute the Bull "Regimini Universalis Ecclesiae", and that is why the latter is recopied here. It is listed in the index of Secret Bulls of Paul III as: "Pro Confraternitate Virginum sub invocatione Sanctae Ursulae confirmatio Institutionis eiusdem Confraternitatis et illius statutorum".<sup>56</sup>

There is a copy of this in the Reg.Vat.1696 of the Vatican Secret Archives, ff.193r-195v [formerly 339r-341v]. The original, which used to belong to the Company of St Ursula at Brescia,<sup>57</sup> is lost today.

This Bull is published as D19.

- Processo esecutoriale (also known as Processo fulminato). This is the document which was customarily written in view of the execution of the Bulls. This particular one concerns the Bull "Regimini Universalis Ecclesiae" of Paul III and gives a complete copy of it. The original, drawn up by Gian Battista Trappa, has remained unknown until today. It is to be found in the State Archives of Brescia, Fondo Notarile, file 1770, year 1546. The attested copy of it, which had the same value as the original, was handed over to Ferretti, the vicar-general, but it has disappeared. There is a copy of this Processo in the Secondo Libro Generale and another in the Miscellanea of Bernardino Faino. It is the latter copy of the Processo fulminato which we are publishing as D20 because Faino had copied it from an attested copy of 1638, which also recorded the canonical intimation of the document to Ferretti.
- Privilegia Virginum. This title refers to the official act authenticating the copy of the Bull of Paul III; that act was delivered by the Episcopal Curia of Brescia in 1570, and was valid with regard to any civil effects. The act, on paper, has been attested by the bishop's chancellor, and carries the seals of Bishop Domenico Bollani and of the Commune of Brescia. It is kept in the Archivio Vescovile in Brescia, sez. Religiosi, busta 27, fasc.2. It is published here as D21.
- Visita Pastorale e documenti aggiunti, Brescia, anno 1580, Milano, Archivio Storico Diocesano, sez.X. Under this title there are 41 volumes contain-

<sup>56</sup> Index. op. cit., f.263v [251v].

57 Regola Brescia, Bologna 1672, p.165.

<sup>55 &</sup>quot;I libri secretorum di Paolo III non esistono più". BRUNO KATTERBACH, Inventario dei registri delle suppliche, Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1932, p.113, n.1.

<sup>58</sup> Secondo Libro Generale, ff.31v-34v; FAINO, Miscellanea, op. cit., ff.85r-92v.

ing not only the Acts and Decrees sent out by the apostolic visitor, but also a whole wealth of documentation gathered together, both before and during the visit, to provide him with an overall picture of the situation in the Brescian diocese. For a number of reasons, mention is made here and there of questions concerning the Company of St Ursula. More precisely, Vol.XIII contains, in 44 handwritten pages, the chapters drawn up to replace the chapter in the Rule of St Angela on the government of the Company. This fragment of the Rule gives no indication as to the author or copyist, but it is signed by Cardinal Charles Borromeo.

- Sacra Rituum Congregatione Romana seu Brixien. ... et Brixien. V. Servae Dei Sor. Angelae Merici Fundatricis Monialium Societatis S.tae Ursulae Beatae nuncupatae. Processus super fama sanctitatis et publico cultu B.ae Servae Dei exhibito, Authoritate Ordinaria Brixiae compilati. These are two volumes, manuscript on paper, with parchment covers, in the Vatican Secret Archives, catalogued Arch. Cong. SS. Rituum, Processus 339, 340. They contain the Acts of Process, carried out at diocesan level, and at Rome at the Ursuline Monastery in Via Vittoria, 59 with a view to the beatification of Angela Merici.

- Sacra Rituum Congregatione Brixien. Canonizationis Beatae Angelae Merici, Fundatricis Societatis S. Ursulae. Processus Apostolicus super Virtutibus et miraculis in specie. These 4 volumes, manuscript on paper, with parchment covers, are catalogued Arch. Congr. SS. Rituum, Processus 341-344. They contain the apostolic process for the canonisation of Blessed Angela Merici in the dioceses of Brescia and Verona. Vol.341 is the most important as it contains copies of some Merician documents of the highest value, some of which we have already mentioned and others which will be referred to later.

We draw special attention here to the act electing Angela Merici as "madre, ministra e tesoriera"; we publish it as D6, taking it from the *Atti del Processo*, as the compiler of these acts copied it from the authentic document.

Attested copies of these two sets of Acts (this set and the one mentioned above, with the exception of Vol.344), are in the General Archives of the Ursulines of the Roman Union. They have been copied on paper into 8 volumes, bound in parchment, and are catalogued AGUUR, B.1-8. This copy, completed 4 March 1776, was carried out at the request and the expense of the Ursulines of the "Venerabile Monastero di Via Vittoria" at Rome, who had promoted, followed and been largely re-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>59</sup> They were originally classified: "Arch. Vat. B.140" and "ms.246". Cf. Pt. III, Ch.IV. for the Processes of beatification and canonisation of Angela Merici.

sponsible for subsidising the canonical processes. When Vol.VI of the copy had been completed, Filippo De Amicis, notary, chancellor and archivist of the Sacred Congregation of Rites declared: "cum quo Processu originali ex eadem copia per me fideliter collationata, et auscultata, et ubi errata fuit pariter a me opportune correcta, et emendata, in omnibus, et per omnia cum eodem originali concordat". 60

Vols. 342-343 correspond to AGUUR, B.7-8; as for the copy of Vol.344, either it never existed or Vol.IX has been lost. It could well have been seized during the period when the monastery at Rome was suppressed, 61 together with other papers from their archives which are now to be found, some in the Archivio di Stato della Capitale, and others in

the Archivio Capitolino.

These manuscript Acts of Process contain copies of the recorded oral and sworn depositions of witnesses, and also of different documents, as well as of extracts from printed works or from existing manuscripts. All this material was utilised as documentary source material in the next phase of the procedure. This takes place at Rome when the canonical Tribunal is transferred from the diocesan level to the Roman Curia represented by the Sacred Congregation of Rites, acting as the official organ of the Holy See.

The basic stages of this whole procedure are known as "Positiones". Two of these take place after the diocesan process concerned with the reputation for sanctity and the public cult; they pave the way for the decree of beatification. The other two, concerned with virtues and miracles, prepare the way for the decree of canonisation. These different stages are documented in separate booklets and printed under the direction of the competent office of the Roman Curia, in limited numbers, for the use of officers and consultors of the ecclesiastical Tribunal and of those directly involved in the Process itself.

A complete set of the publications belonging to each of the "Positiones" is at present in the Bibliothèque Nationale at Paris, catalogued H.669-673.62

We will deal with these stages of the Process in Pt.III, Ch.IV of our study, making use also of some of the documents which are found in the

61 Cf. infra, Pt.III, Ch.IV, n.26.

<sup>60</sup> AGUUR, B.6, f.1522.

<sup>62</sup> Lombardi, in his *Vita*, numbers the first four "Positiones" chronologically I,II,III,IV. Later in this volume we will be referring to them in the same way. We give here the subject-matter of each: Positio I – on the introduction of the Cause; Positio II – on the cult of Angela Merici and her reputation of sanctity; Positio III – on the validity of the Brescian process regarding the virtues and the miracles of Bl. Angela; Positio IV – on the heroic nature of her virtues.

Patriarchal Archives at Venice (Archivio Patriarcale di Venezia, sala Monico, XXa, 345/2 and 786/4).

### e) Executed deeds

In spite of the loss and dispersal of many documents, the "Fondo Notarile" of the State Archives at Brescia is a rich source of interesting material.

The Acts which we present here and those which we will point out as we go along, as well as others not indicated, have all furnished or confirmed information about people and events during the twenty years following Angela's death. These documents, which have never been studied before, throw a little light on the crisis which shook the Company of St Ursula at that time.

- Mandatum Societatis Sancte Ursule, on paper. It names the "procuratrices, administratrices et negotiorum gestatrices" of the Company. The Act was executed by the notary Gio. Maria Maffetti, on 22 February 1545. It is catalogued ASB, Fondo Notarile, Gio. Maria Maffetti, file 850. (cf.D27).
- Electio pro Confraternitate Sanctae Ursulae Brixiae; on paper. Act for the election of officials and procurators for the Company of St Ursula, executed by the notary Girolamo Zanetti, on 23 November 1555. It is in ASB, Fondo Notarile, Girolamo Zanetti, file 1694. (cf.D28).
- In solutum datio magnifici domini Hieronimi de Luzago. Confraternitati Sanctae Ursulae Brixiae, cum liberationibus; on paper. Of interest for the names of the members of the Company which are given here. The Act was executed by the notary Girolamo Zanetti, on 30 November 1555. ASB, Fondo Notarile, Girolamo Zanetti, file 1694.
- Procura pro Societate Sanctae Ursulae; on paper. Of interest for the list of people who are mentioned here and for the functions with which Gabriele Cozzano is charged. Act executed by the notary Girolamo Zanetti, on 18 September 1556. ASB, Fondo Notarile, Girolamo Zanetti, file 1694. (cf.D29).
- Minutes of an enquiry relating to a charge brought against Ginevra Luzzago. The Act, on paper, was executed by the notary Simone Sospiri,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>63</sup> Several of the documents belonging to this "Fondo Notarile" were discovered through the help of the late Prof. Camillo Boselli. To help us decipher some of them, we turned to Prof. Giovanna Daverio, expert in paleography, ancient documents and archives. The document dated 22 February 1545 was transcribed by Prof. Leonardo Mazzoldi, former Inspector-General of the State Archives.

- on 31 May 1558. ASB, Fondo Notarile, Simone Sospiri, File 1127. (cf.D30).
- Fides pro Societate Sancte Ursule or "Processo esecutoriale" conducted by Fra Andrea Cattaneo dell'Ordine degli Umiliati di Crema, who was charged with executing the Letter of the Apostolic Legate of Venice against the priest Giovan Paolo dalla Corte and in favour of Ginevra Luzzago. It is on paper, and was executed by the notary Girolamo Zanetti, on 31 July 1558. ASB, Fondo Notarile, Girolamo Zanetti, file 1694. (cf.D31).
- Datio in solutum magnifici domini Hieronimi Luzaghi Societati Sanctae Ursulae Brixiae. This is another important document, on account of the names that are listed. On paper, it was executed by the notary Girolamo Zanetti, and dated 19 November 1559. ASB, Fondo Notarile, Girolamo Zanetti, file 1695. (cf.D33).

From the State Archives at Milan, the will of Ginevra Luzzago:

- Testamentum magnificae dominae Genebriae de Luzagis, (made public on 18 September 1558). Copied on ff.66v-67r of a parchment register; Milano, Archivio di Stato, Fondo di Religione, register n.223, Brescia S. Affra alias S. Salvatore (Lateranensi). The register is listed also in the Inventario Registri on p.16 as n.56. (cf.D32).

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# Chapter II

# GENERAL OUTLINE OF MERICIAN HISTORIOGRAPHY

Merician historiography now covers more than four centuries, during which time it has gone through periods of aridity and periods of intense output. A number of favourable circumstances are responsible for the latter, such as the rapid spread of the Company of St Ursula in Italy and of the Order of St Ursula in Europe during the 16th and 17th centuries; a great upsurge of interest in Angela Merici during the second half of the 18th century, with the convergence of evidence at Brescia and Rome on the occasion of the processes of beatification and canonisation of Angela, (which were abruptly interrupted by the French Revolution); the resurgence of this interest at the beginning of the 19th century, in conjunction with the canonisation celebrations at St Peter's; and finally, in the 20th century, the birth and steady growth of a new direction in Merician historiography, a direction which forms part of the wider movement of contemporary historiographical critical study.

In this chapter we will introduce those authors who, in our view, invite special interest, in that they have helped to make Angela better known. Intermediate works take a lead, more or less consciously, from their writings.

We can gather information about these works, namely those produced before 1760, in the Summarium Additionale, already referred to, which was printed by the Sacred Congregation of Rites in 1761, that is, during the initial stages of the process of Angela's beatification at the Roman Curia.¹ Under heading n.4 are listed all the printed works in which Angela is given the title of "Saint" (11 works) or "Blessed" (72 works). This kind of literature is mainly spiritual or hagiographical (not to say generic); sometimes Angela is just mentioned or quoted as an example, and sometimes her profile is sketched with the sole aim of giving edification and highlighting anything that is extraordinary and mi-

raculous. As these works make no contribution whatever to Merician

historiography, we are not going to consider them.

It is greatly to be hoped that one day a complete Merician bibliography will be produced, with a minimum of historical and critical introduction, and that this bibliography will cover the period from 1540 to our own day, including everything that has been written about Angela anywhere in the world. The first two worthwhile attempts are:

- Bernarda [Ross], Schrifttum zur Geschichte der Heiligen Mutter Angela und ihrer Stiftung, in "Beiträge zur Darstellung und zur Geschichte des Ursulinenordens". VIII. Jahrbuch des verbandes Selbständiger deutscher Ursulinenklöster. Weihnachten 1934. Herausgegeben vom Ursulinenkloster in Berlin, pp.60-89. This bibliography is the most documented one we have.
- CECYLJA ŁUBIEŃSKA, Bibljografia o Świętej Anieli, in Święta Aniela Merici i jej Dzieło, Kraków 1935, pp.XXXVII-LXVIII.

#### 1. 16TH AND 17TH CENTURIES

The first tentative steps consisted of personal souvenirs written out of affection and devotion. These were followed, in the course of the 16th and 17th centuries, by some attempts at reconstructing a biography of Angela Merici. They mark the dawn, as it were, of a historiography which still has a lot to say today.

# a) Francesco Landini (1530-1608)

The first items of biographical interest about Angela Merici were collected and then handed down by Francesco (or Franceschino) Landini, priest of S. Maria della Pace and confessor to the Company of St Ursula. In 1566, when transmitting a copy of the Rule to one of Cardinal Borromeo's collaborators, Father Franceschino Visdomini, he had sent a letter with it giving some information about the Foundress and her institution. No trace is left of this original letter, which was dated 21 December 1566, but an extract from it has been published and reprinted several times:

– Estratto d'una lettera del P. Francesco Landini che sta nel Monte vicino a Brescia, scritta al Rev. P. Frate Franceschino Visdomini dell'ordine de Minori adì 21 decembre 1566. As far as we know, this extract appeared for the first time in the Regola della Compagnia di S. Orsola, published at Milan by Paci-

fico Ponte in October 1569; <sup>2</sup> then it appeared in the Rule published by the Fratelli da Meda in 1570,<sup>3</sup> and in another Rule published by Ponte again in 1577.<sup>4</sup> Later on, the *Acta Ecclesiae Mediolanensis*, published in 1582,<sup>5</sup> contained a Rule accompanied by the same extract; and it is to be found again with the Rule printed by Pacifico Ponte in 1585.<sup>6</sup> (cf.D15).

Landini himself recognised the value and the limitations of the portrait he gave of Angela and of his short notes about the Company of St Ursula. He states, indeed, that he based himself on evidence collected from "several women, servants of God, nearly all of whom lived at her time"; but then he adds: "... but I cannot relate everything, because it is not easy for me at present to go to Brescia to talk with the women who used to be in close contact with her". Thus, the biographical information he gives is more the fruit of an oral tradition gathered together from trustworthy witnesses and stored in the memory, than of a specific en-

<sup>3</sup> Regola della Compagnia di Santa Orsola, fatta per quelle Giovani le quali desiderano servire a Dio nel stato virginale, stando nel secolo: e per quelle, le quali per povertà o per altri impedimenti non possono entrare in Monasterii. Aggiontovi i capitoli del Governo, che hanno di havere i Governatori, e Governatrici d'essa Compagnia. Con licenza dell'Illustriss. et Reverendiss. Sig. Cardinal Borromeo, Arcivescovo di Milano. In Milano, per Valerio et Hieronimo fratelli da Meda, 1570, ff.[B6-B8v].

ASDM, Sez.XIII, vol.61.

<sup>4</sup> Regola della Compagnia di Sant'Orsola, fatta per quelle Giovani, le quali desiderano servire a Dio nel stato verginale, stando nel secolo; e per quelle, le quali per povertà, o per altri impedimenti non possono entrare in Monasterii. Aggiontovi i capitoli del Governo, che hanno di havere i Governatori, e Governatrici d'essa Compagnia. Con licenza dell' Illustriss. et Reverendiss. Cardinal di Santa Prassede, Arcivescovo di Milano. In Milano per Pacifico Pontio, impressore di Monsignor Illustriss. Arcivescovo 1577. A copy of this is in the Biblioteca Vallicelliana di Roma, S. Borr. I-IV-186. In the Atti del Processo it has been incorrectly marked as "Manoscritto Vallicelliano I-IV-186". (APC. Vat. 341, f.863v).

<sup>5</sup> Acta Ecclesiae Mediolanensis tribus partibus distincta. Quibus concilia provincialia, conciones synodales, synodi dioecesanae, instructiones, litterae pastorales, edicta, regulae confratriarum, formulae, et alia denique continentur, quae CAROLUS S.R.E. Cardinalis tit. S. Praxedis, Archiepiscopus egit. Mediolani, Apud Pacificum Pontium, MDLXXXII, ff.338v-339r. Milano, Biblioteca Ambrosiana,

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<sup>6</sup> Regola della Compagnia delle Vergini della gloriosa Vergine e Martire S. Orsola, e delle sue Undici mille compagne. Fatta per quelle giovani, le quali desiderano servir a Dio nello stato verginale stando nel Secolo, e per quelle le quali per povertà, o per altri impedimenti non possono entrar in Monasterii. Con li capitoli del governo, che debbono havere i Governatori, e le Governatrici di essa Compagnia. E con la forma delle Cerimonie da usare quando le Vergini si velano, e quando si stabiliscono nella Compagnia. La qual Compagnia, e Regola non solamente è stata instituita et approbata dall'Ilustriss. e Reverendiss. Cardinal di S. Prassede Arcivescovo di Milano, Ma anco poi ad instantia sua, approbata dalla Santità di Nostro Sig. Papa Gregorio XIII, come per un breve posto nel fine appare. In Milano, appresso Pacifico Pontio Impressore della Corte Archiepisc. 1585.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Regola della Compagnia di Santa Orsola, fatta per quelle Giovani le quali desiderano servire a Dio nel stato verginale, stando nel secolo; e per quelle, le quali per povertà, o per altri impedimenti non possano entrare in Monasterii. Aggiontovi i capitoli del Governo, che hanno di havere i Governatori, e Governatrici d'essa Compagnia. Con licenza dell' Illustriss. et Reverendiss. Sig. Cardinal Borromeo, Arcivescovo di Milano. In Milano, si vendono al Segno della Stella. [Per Pacifico Ponte, nel mese d'Ottobre, l'anno del Signore 1569]. Cf. pp.27-32. There is a copy in the Archivio Storico Diocesano di Milano (ASDM), Sez.XIII, vol.61.

quiry arising from a definite situation. At the same time, though, the author shows that he is conversant with the reasons for the foundation of the Company of St Ursula, as well as with the apostolic activities of its members. Nor does he hesitate to refer to the serious crisis which the Company had undergone after the death of the Foundress. In general, therefore, Landini is a reliable source.

In the first section of the *Positio IV* of the APC printed by the Sacred Congregation of Rites, the extract published in the 1577 Rule is evaluated in the following terms: "omnem sibi vindicat fidem perinde ac si esset authographum; quandoquidem editio isthaec facta fuit iussu S. Caroli Borromaei, penes quem erat dictum Authographum".<sup>7</sup>

## b) Giovan Battista Nazari de Sayani (1533-?)

The first biography which was written with set purpose, and not just incidentally, may not reveal the recognised methods of a historian, but it certainly shows those of a lawyer. It is entitled:

- Vita et morte della Rda Madre suor Angela. This "Life" is preceded by a letter of dedication "Alle nobili matrone le signore Bianca Porcelaga, Veronica Butia..." (seven other names follow) "rettrici, et governatrici della regola di Santa Orsola di Brescia. Gio. Battista Nazzari Bresciano".

The Vita is followed by:

- Le Justificationi della vita della Rda Madre suor Angela terzebita. The originals of these two manuscripts are lost, but there is a copy of them in the Acts of Process of canonisation in the Vatican Secret Archives,<sup>8</sup> and another copy exists in the Secondo Libro Generale.<sup>9</sup>

Let us briefly introduce the author. In the "polizze d'estimo" for 1568 (the same year as the *Justificationi*) there is mention of a certain Giovan Battista Nazari, <sup>10</sup> son of the late Giovan Faustino di Nazari called de' Sayani. He is 35 years old, and married to Paola, the same age as himself. He has no children. The declaration that his father had made for the preceding returns in 1548<sup>11</sup> was clearly under the name of "Zohan Faustino Sayano, q. Messer Francesco di Sayani Nodari" who had a 15 years old son, "Zohanbatista". The designation "Nodari" would suggest a line of notaries. The author of the *Vita* and the *Justificationi* is called Giovan

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Informatio super dubio an constet de Virtutibus Theologalibus... etc., Romae, 1777, p.3. cf.supra, Pt.I, Ch.I, n.62.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> APC. Vat., vol.341, ff.927v-945v.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> On ff.1-11.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> PE, n.93 and n.220.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> PE, n.119 and n.237.

Battista Nazari de Sayani. The addition of "de Sayani" helps to distinguish him from another Giovan Battista Nazari, author of several learned works, including: Bressa antica. Origine della città con li suoi culti a' dei antichi, Brescia, presso Vincenzo Sabbio, 1562; Discorso della futura e sperata vittoria contro il Turco, Venezia, 1570; Della tramutazione metallica sogni tre. Primo della falsa tramutazione sofistica. Secondo della utile tramutazione detta reale usuale. Terzo della divina detta reale filosofica. In Brescia, presso Ciotti, 1599. In 4°.12

In 1568, as is indicated on a page of the ancient *Libro dei Conti* belonging to the Company of St Ursula, a copy of which is in the APC,<sup>13</sup> Nazari de Sayani, with the permission of the bishop of Brescia, and at the request of the governesses of the same Company, carried out a kind of process-interrogation of four inhabitants of Brescia who had been eye-witnesses of the life of Angela Merici, and drew up a report. The *Iustificationi* is, in fact, his report of their depositions.<sup>14</sup>

This interrogation has been copied out also in *Di vari Santi Bresciani*, the manuscript D.VII.20, cited above, from the Biblioteca Queriniana, with the sub-title of "Processo". Doneda <sup>15</sup> generally calls it "*Processo Nazari*", and this is the name which has passed into the current language of Merician circles.

No sooner had he finished the *Justificationi* than Nazari started work on the *Vita*. <sup>16</sup> The "Processo Nazari" had been instructed with the approval of the ordinary of Brescia. The fact that he had given his consent is certainly noteworthy when one recalls the diligence and careful attention with which Bishop Domenico Bollani governed the diocese of Brescia. <sup>17</sup> If he had given his approval to the project undertaken at the request of the leading members of the Company, he must have done so on good grounds.

As for the four witnesses called to give testimony, whom we will meet again later, they had all known Angela Merici personally. Two of them had given her shelter under their own roof: Antonio Romano and Agostino Gallo; and the other two, Bertolino Boscoli and Giacomo

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> LEONARDO COZZANDO, *Libreria Bresciana*, in Brescia, 1694, Per Gio. Maria Rizzardi (BQ, classified SB.B.VIII) under the heading of "Gio. Battista Nazari", p.115.

<sup>13</sup> APC. Vat. 341, f.946.

<sup>14</sup> APC. Vat. 341, ff.936v-945v. D16.

<sup>15</sup> DONEDA, Vita, op. cit., p.8.

<sup>16</sup> APC. Vat. 341, ff.927v-936r.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> C. CAIRNS, Domenico Bollani Bishop of Brescia, Devotion to Church and State in the Republic of Venice in the Sixteenth Century, Nieuwkoop 1976; FRANCO MOLINARI, Domenico Bollani (1514-1579) vescovo di Brescia e Carlo Borromeo (1538-1584). Linee di ricerca sulla pastorale post-tridentina in una Chiesa locale, Libreria Universitaria di Vorrasi S. Via Trieste, 32, Brescia, s.a.

Chizzola, had had dealings with her during her stay in Brescia. All four, officially interrogated, had had to take an oath at the beginning. Their depositions, which were recorded in the minutes, (in other words, the *Justificationi*), show that the four witnesses did not try to come to a common agreement beforehand.

It is clear from the reading of the text of the *Vita* written by Nazari that he is no writer, but what does come through is his honesty as a lawyer and his attention to detail. Don Vincenzo Bighelli, librarian of the Queriniana mentioned earlier and handwriting expert at the Tribunal for the Process of canonisation of Blessed Angela, probably confusing him with his namesake, considers him "a person most learned and scholarly for his time, especially in matters relating to his Country". Then he adds: "He was a public notary by profession, and it was in this capacity that he undertook the charge of compiling the life of Blessed Angela. During 1568 he examined the four witnesses already mentioned, witnesses who were quite beyond reproach ... I do not know who the copyist was, but what I do know is that the Instrument of the aforementioned examination is authentic and valid, because at the end there is the signature in the hand of Nazari himself and his paraph as a notary. For this reason, I esteem all these things to be true and real ...". <sup>18</sup>

And Bighelli continues: "At the time of our ancestors some manuscript copies of it appeared in public; I read one of them in a manuscript in 4° in the Libreria Queriniana, entitled *Prato Spirituale della città di Brescia*, which in my opinion is about a century and a half old". <sup>19</sup>

Since Nazari's original has not been found up to now, we are giving Bighelli's description of it, in case this may eventually help someone to discover it in some archive-collection or library.

The manuscript was entitled: Libro della Reverenda et quasi Beata Madre Suor Angela Fondatrice della Compagnia di Sant'Orsola di Brescia con le Iustificationi di essa vita, et anco si contiene il voto delle vergini di detta Regola. This work of Nazari indeed formed a whole with the register of those virgins

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., f.884r. "... al tempo de' nostri avi ne uscirono in pubblico delle copie manoscritte, una delle quali io ho letta in un codice manoscritto in 4°, che esiste nella Libreria Queriniana intitolato *Prato spirituale della città di Brescia*, il quale a mio parere ha circa un secolo e mezzo di età". We were not

able to track down this manuscript which Bighelli saw in the Biblioteca Queriniana.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> APC. Vat. 341, ff.883v-884r. "... un soggetto dotto ed erudito riguardi a' suoi tempi, e specialmente dei fatti della sua Patria". ... "Egli esercitava la professione di pubblico notaio, e quindi fu che, assunto l'impegno di compilare la vita della Beata Angela, dentro l'anno 1568 esaminò gli accennati quattro testimoni maggiori di ogni eccezzione... Chi sia stato l'amanuense, a me non consta: ben però so che l'Istromento del predetto esame è autentico e legale, perché nel fine vi è la sottoscrizione di mano dello stesso Nazari, e ancora il suo segno di Notaio. Per il che io le stimo tutte cose vere e reali...". The *Justificationi* of Nazari would have a determining influence during the process of canonisation of Angela. cf. infra, Pt.III, Ch.IV, 3.b.

who, between 1568 and 1600, had made a vow of virginity in public.

The work altogether consisted of 172 folios.<sup>20</sup>

"Having read and examined with great pleasure the book that has been shown to me, I reply that this is a book to be valued highly and held in high esteem, and one which merits to be judged trustworthy during any process. In the first place, on account of the outward appearance of the book itself, which is of medium size, covered in red-colour skin, and stamped with some decorations in relief. Attached to the book are some silk cords which were called 'nistole'. Secondly, on account of the page-edges, which have been painted in purple, and for the black leather case, specially made for the book and lined with strong cardboard. The case is stamped over with impressions of heads of angels, flowers, and other designs and arabesques, all dating back at least two hundred years.

"The title is written in noble capital letters. Surrounding it is a rectangular border of interlacing cherubs and nobiliary coats-of-arms of some of the leading Brescian families, and other similar works, drawn by pen in a reddish-colour ink. One can also admire similar pen-drawings

on some of the other pages.

"There is one design, however, which I cannot pass over. This is the one which occupies the whole of the second page. The border, designed in the manner already described, frames an image of St Ursula, who is dressed in a cloak and crowned like a queen. She is standing in a court of magnificent ancient style and is presenting a standard bearing the Cross to Blessed Angela, who receives it kneeling, with an eloquent gesture of devotion.

"The paper has been chosen from among the best and is white, smooth and strong. Every page has been lined. The lettering is large, elegant and, as it is called, cursive; but in some places where they fit, one

also finds some round-hand letters, both capital and small.

"Having reflected on the extraordinary care taken to produce and to preserve this manuscript, which has always been kept in the Archives of the Ursulines, from what I have heard, I cannot but judge this aforesaid manuscript to have been highly esteemed, first by the persons who were in charge of the Company two hundred years ago, and likewise by those who came afterwards, and that it is entirely trustworthy and creditable".<sup>21</sup>

20 APC. Vat. 341, f.868v.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> APC. Vat. 341, ff.882r-883r: "Letto e considerato con sommo piacere il libro esibitomi, rispondo, essere questo un libro da farne molta stima, e tenersene gran credito, e degno di prestarglisi ogni fede in giudizio: primieramente per l'esterna faccia del medesimo, la quale, essendo in forma di foglio mezzano coperto di pelle rossa, spiccanvi in esso alcuni ornamenti fatti col ferro; il quale ha at-

The first print of the Vita and the Justificationi is certainly the one included in the section of Positio I of the Apostolic Process, Summarium super dubio an sit signanda Commissio Introductionis Causae, pp.2-16. There is a reprint in Positio IV, Summarium super dubio an constet de Virtutibus Theologalibus, pp.25-31.

Giuditta Bertolotti published the *Vita* and *Justificationi* in the various editions of her work,<sup>22</sup> taking them from the ms.D.VII.20 in the Queriniana, which shows some variants when compared with the APC

text.

Teresa Ledóchowska also published the *Justificationi*, but taking it from the manuscript text in the APC. Vat. 341.<sup>23</sup> We are doing the same and are publishing the *Justificationi* as D16 together with the *Vita* as D17.

## c) Mattia Bellintani (1535-1611)

Father Mattia Bellintani, a Capuchin from Salò, wrote at least two different biographies of Angela Merici; one consisting of 31 chapters and the other of 28 points followed by documents.

- Vita della B. Angela da Desenzano, in 31 chapters.

At the time of the Processes, the autographed manuscript of this existed, but without chapters 26-31. That it was indeed an autograph had been proved by the calligraphy experts,<sup>24</sup> by comparing the handwriting on this with the one on some of the documents belonging to the Cap-

taccate certe cordelle di seta che si chiamavano nistole. Secondariamente per gli orli delle carte, quali sono tinti d'un color pavonazzo, e per la busta di cuoio nero formata sul suo dosso, foderata di forte cartone, tutta improntata a stampa di ferro di teste di cherubini e di fiori, ed altri ornati e rabeschi, roba tutta di ducent'anni addietro per lo meno. Il suo titolo è scritto a lettere maiuscole e nobili, nel mezzo d'una cornice quadrangolare lavorata a penna con tinta rosseggiante, intrecciata di angioletti e di armi gentilizie d'alcune nobili famiglie bresciane, e di simili lavori e tratti di penna anche in altre pagine si ammirano. Uno però non debbo tacere, ed è quello alla pagina 2, la quale ne resta tutta occupata. Ivi, contornata da una cornice travagliata sulla maniera descritta, si vede, in un cortile di magnifica fabrica antica, delineata l'imagine in piedi di sant'Orsola ammantata e coronata come regina, la quale stende uno stendardo insignito di croce alla beata Angela, che in ginocchioni lo prende, dimostrando in tal atto una gran divozione. La carta è stata scielta della megliore, bianca, liscia e forte. Ogni facciata è stata rigata; il carattere è grande, galante e, come chiamasi, corsivo, ma a suoi luoghi ha opportunamente ancor del rotondo, sì maiuscolo che minuscolo. Avendo riflesso alla straordinaria diligenza per formare e conservare la perpetuità di questo codice, quale si è sempre custodito nell'Archivio delle Orsoline, come ho inteso dire, non posso a meno di giudicare che il detto codice, incominciando da quelle persone le quali duecento anni addietro presiedevano alla detta Compagnia, fosse molto stimato, come lo è stato anche dopo, e che sia degno di piena fede, e credito".

24 APC. Vat. 341, ff.878v-879r.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> Cf. infra, 3.a.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> LEDÓCHOWSKA, Angela, op. cit., I. pp.289-300.

uchin Order, where Bellintani had been provincial, general assessor, general commissioner of France and Switzerland, and general visitor for Bohemia. A complete copy of this text, with all 31 chapters, used to be kept in the Biblioteca della Congregazione dei Padri della Pace or dell'Oratorio, but is now in the Biblioteca Queriniana. Compared with the autographed text, it can be seen that it is a true copy, apart from a few simple variants of writing. Now there is a letter from Father Francesco Corbello of the Oratory, a copy of which is in the APC, where he made a clear reference to a copy ordered by the superior general of the Company of St Ursula at Brescia. Corp.

The Atti del Processo describe the original in these terms:

"... quae quidem Vita conflat perexiguum quinternulum paginarum decem spisso minusculo, et pervetusto charactere coloris flavescentis scriptarum. Initialia verba huius quinternuli haec sunt: 'La Vita della Beata Angela da Desenzano. Proemio. Sono in vero le vite de santi'. Finalia vero haec alia: 'Et iscampò dai persecutori, e dal Mar Rosso, sequestrato dalle genti nel deserto'. Idem quinternulus non est integer, sed mutilus et mancus, cum finalia eius folia deciderentur fortuito casu deperdita...". <sup>27</sup>

As for the manuscript copy which is now in the Queriniana, it was presented to the canonical process by the Prefect of the Oratorians' Library. It is a small exercise book, 23 x 17cm. The minutes record that the Librarian: "dimisit libellum manuscriptum in folio parvo coopertum crassa charta, vulgo *carton limo* coloris albi, cuius paginae numeratae vigesimam primam non excedunt, exhibentem exemplum vitae Beatae Angelae Mericiae ex originali historia composita a praefato patre Bellintano Cappuccino, desumptum cura antedicti reverendi patris Francisci Corbello eiusdem congregationis [of the Oratory, or of Peace] presbyteri, et tum temporis spiritualis Magistri Societatis Sanctae Ursulae...". 28

Both the mutilated original and the copy of the Oratorian Fathers were copied out in the Atti del Processo.<sup>29</sup>

Father Mattia is a typical preacher of his day and one of the most distinguished.<sup>30</sup> This is shown through his language of imagery, his sol-

<sup>25</sup> Classified ms.B.VI.30.

<sup>26</sup> APC. Vat. 341, ff.920v-921v.

APC. Vat. 341, f.865v.
 APC. Vat. 341, f.866v.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> The mutilated original was copied in the APC. Vat. 340, ff.572r-594r. The complete copy was transcribed in the APC. Vat. 340, ff.606r-635r; and then in the APC. Vat. 341, ff.893r-920v.

Monumenta Historica Ordinis Minorum Capuccinorum, vol.V, Matthias a Salò OFM Cap., Historia Capuccina. In lucem edita a P. Melchiore a Pobladura, OFM Cap., Romae, 1946. On pp.XXIII-LXXX there is a Conspectus chronologicus vitae P. Matthiae Salodiensis which gives a year by year account of his life.

emn sentences, his search after effect, and the way he labours to invest even the smallest happening with a spiritual interpretation. In this *Vita* he openly sets out to exhort and to eulogise, and so it could well be the one commissioned from him by the "madre generala della Compagnia delle demesse a nome di tutta la Compagnia", as is stated in the letter of Father Francesco Corbello.<sup>31</sup>

- Vita della B. Angela fondatrice della Compagnia delle vergini di S. Orsola, in 28 points, published in the Monumenta Historiae Capuccinorum, 22 vol.VI, Historia Capuccina. It is followed by a revised version of the Regola della Compagnia in 12 chapters, by a short account of Angela's Testamento and by an Italian translation of the Bull of Paul III. This Vita must have been unknown in the 18th century because there is no mention of it in any of the Merician literature of the period, not even in the bibliography of the Summarium Additionale. It is taken from the codex R, t.II, ff.35v-54r, which is in the General Archives of the Order of Friars Minor Capuchin, classified AC, 19-20.

The style of this second *Vita*, stripped of the bombast which weighed down the previous text mentioned, moves along quickly with a much lighter touch. Here Bellintani makes use of more restrained criteria. Perhaps he simply wanted to write a page of history to insert in the *Chronica* which he was preparing at that time. He had justified the insertion of this biography by the fact that Angela had belonged to the Third Order of St Francis, and had done so in a preface, which had been de-

leted in the original manuscript at a later date.

A certain Brother Giacomo da Salò had made a note in the margin of this manuscript: "Quid ad nos? Especially as it [the *Vita*] is printed quasi ad litteram under a false name".<sup>33</sup> The manuscript in the Queriniana, ms.B.VI.30, also bears a similar note on the back of the cover: "This 'Life of Bl. Angela of Desenzano' was the work of the reverend Fr Matia Capucino Belentano, and then it was arranged and shortened into another form, with two prefaces, by the reverend priest Octavio Gondi, of the Company of Jesus". Doneda had also seen this note.<sup>34</sup> But we will speak about Gondi's biography under the next heading.

32 Monumenta, op. cit., vol.VI, pp.77-113.

<sup>34</sup> DONEDA, *Vita. op. cit.*, p.12. "Questa 'Vita della B. Angela da Desenzano' fu fatta dal rev.do P. Matia Capucino Belentano; poi fu raccomodata, et ridutta in altra forma, con doi prefatione, dal

r.do prete Octavio Gondi, della Comp. del Giesù".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, pp.LVIII-LIX. This letter is also reported in the APC. Vat. 340, ff.605r-606r and 341, ff.920v-921v.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> Ibid., p.77. "Quid ad nos? Tanto più essendo stampata quasi ad litteram sotto nome finto". The "false name" he alludes to is that of Ottavio Gondi, a Jesuit from Florence. But Fra Giacomo has not reflected on the fact that Angela was a Franciscan tertiary; furthermore he has not distinguished between Bellintani and Gondi.

The writer of the "Introductio Generalis" of Vol.V of *Monumenta*, already cited,<sup>35</sup> also points out that: "profecto in exemplari bibliothecae Querinianae desunt hae duae praefationes". This is true, because the two "prefaces" he refers to are not Bellintani's but Gondi's; Gondi's printed work, in fact, is very different from Bellintani's, consisting of two parts, each with its own preface.

The same "Introductio Generalis" cites, as an alternative to the manuscript in the Queriniana, the "processus beatificationis et canonizationis S. Angelae Merici, qui Romae apud Curiam Generalem Sororum S. Ursulae Unionis Romanae custoditur... Apographon factum est an. 1758 et in paucis differt sive a textu cod. bibl. Querinianae sive a textu Historiae Capucinae".

With a concern for accuracy, let us recall that this manuscript in the AGUUR is the attested copy of the *Atti del Processo*, which are kept in the Vatican Secret Archives. Both texts faithfully reproduce the mutilated autographed original (which is lost today) and the complete manuscript copied from this, which is in the Queriniana. But they do not reproduce the edited version in the *Monumenta* which, as we have noted above, departs considerably from the text in the Queriniana.

Regarding the sources of information which Bellintani would have had at his disposal, attention must be drawn to the fact that already before 1552 he had spent some time in Brescia, as a "maestro di lettere" in the house of one of the Avogadro nobility. He had returned to Brescia from time to time for reasons connected with study or his ministry. He had also stayed for long periods at Salò, as his family had moved there when he was still a child, and he often used to carry out his priestly ministry there. Therefore he could well have heard about Angela, as memory of her was still very fresh.

It must be added that Bellintani was more a man of prayer, government and action, than a man of study and learning. Thus, while there is no reason to doubt his honesty and moral rectitude when he is writing about events of which he is aware, one finds that he lacks the scientific discipline, the objectivity in analysing facts and the criteria of methodology, which, moreover, are the characteristics of a relatively new historiography.

35 Monumenta, op. cit., vol.V, p.LX.

<sup>36 &</sup>quot;Conspectus chronologicus vitae P. Matthiae Salodiensis", in the *Monumenta*, op. cit., vol.V, pp.XXXVI-LIII.

Jesuit, confessor of St Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi, and another well-known preacher, Ottavio Gondi is the author of the first printed biography of Angela Merici. It was published anonymously at first, then under the pseudonym of Ottavio Fiorentino (he was, in fact, a Florentine by birth). He was on good terms with Alessandro Luzzago, protector of the Company of St Ursula and grandson of that Ginevra Luzzago who had been one of the first governesses of the Company. It seems even likely that he wrote his work at the request of Alessandro.<sup>37</sup>

– Vita della Beata Angela Bresciana, prima fondatrice della Compagnia di

S. Orsola. In Brescia, appresso Vincenzo Sabbio, 1600.

This *Vita* is in the Biblioteca Queriniana at Brescia, classified 7.D.III.16.m.3, and also in the Mazarine at Paris, catalogued HH-71. The small book, in 4°, includes: "Dedication from the Editor to Mgr Marino Giorgio, Bishop of Brescia" (pp.3-5); "Preface" (pp.7-12); "Book I" (pp.13-32); "Preface" (pp.33-38); "Book II" (pp.39-65); "Testament of Blessed Angela" (this is really a very reduced summary, pp.66-72); and a page with the heading: "The end" (that is, the approvals from the competent Brescian ecclesiastical authority, p.72).

In the "Dedication of the Editor", Vincenzo Sabbio says that he feels urged to publish the *Vita* on account of "the great spiritual help which it would bring, not only to the devout virgins of this Company,

but also to others who have a taste for spiritual things".38

In his turn, Pietro Maria Marchetti, who published the 1620 edition, will give his name to the same "Dedication". However, this dedication does not reveal the intentions of the author himself, who in the two "Prefaces" exalts God's action in the founders of religious families, keeping strictly to a spiritual discourse without the slightest reference to the method he has used in his research. Just touching on the subject, he then mentions the existence of attested documents lying among the manuscript books in the care of the mother general of the Company, but he does not say whether he consulted them, or how far.

The biographical details are sparse and elementary. It is easy to see that this *Vita* depends on Bellintani's, the one published in the *Monu-*

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> DONEDA, *Vita. op. cit.*, p.17, n.(f). LOMBARDI, *Vita. op. cit.*, p.XI, n.(a), states: "Di fatto, nel-l'Oratorio domestico delle Orsoline di Brescia vedesi un quadro bellissimo, dove si rappresenta il Ven. Alessandro suddetto in piedi, che tiene in mano un libro aperto col frontespizio che dice *Vita della Beata Angela*, per indicare che il Venerabile fu quegli che il primo la fece stampare con questo titolo".

 $<sup>^{38}</sup>$  GONDI, Vita. op. cit., ed. 1600, p.4; ed.1620, p.3. "... grande aiuto spirituale apporterebbe non pur alle divote vergini di detta Compagnia: ma anchora all'altre, che dello spirito han qualche gusto".

menta Historiae Capuccinorum. This, in fact, is noted by the editor of the Monumenta himself: "Maxima similitudo inter utramque deprehenditur: sed plures quoque adventiciae ibidem conspiciuntur dissimilitudines, quae vel alium fontem vel aliam eiusdem fontis compositionem exigunt. Existimamus hunc fontem communem esse vitam ab ipso Matthia primitus conscriptam, quam in duobus codicibus asservatam novimus". 39

It is also possible that Gondi may have collected some of his information from the Luzzago family, as in certain details he is more informed than Bellintani.

It was well-known that Bellintani was Gondi's source. We have already mentioned the ancient note attached to the back of Bellintani's manuscript in the Queriniana. In the *Biblioteca dei Frati Minori* the various reprints of Gondi's *Vita* (1600, 1605, 1618, 1619, 1620, 1638) appear under the heading of "Mattia da Salò". This name, however, has been put in brackets, and someone has added the name of Ottavio Gondi, who would have drawn on the manuscript of the Capuchin Father for his own work.<sup>40</sup>

There is a certain ambiguity about the author's name arising from the fact that various editions were published anonymously or under the pseudonym of "Ottavio Fiorentino". Sommervogel <sup>41</sup> is quite certain that this "padre Ottavio Fiorentino" is none other than the Jesuit Ottavio Gondi, but Faino and Doneda <sup>42</sup> had already reached the same conclusion, especially Doneda after he had discovered evidence about it among the papers of the ordinary diocesan process carried out for the beatification of Ven. Alessandro Luzzago.

Neither Sommervogel's Bibliothèque de la Compagnie de Jésus nor the Biblioteca dei Frati Minori Cappuccini inspires sufficient confidence in the information it gives to reconstruct with any accuracy the bibliographical data of the different editions: the former consists of just a list of dates, and the latter gives only the opening words of the titles of some of these editions. Here are a few examples:

<sup>39</sup> Monumenta, op. cit., vol.V, pp.LIX-LX.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>40</sup> P. ILARINO DA MILANO, OFM. Capp., Biblioteca dei Frati Minori Cappuccini di Lombardia (1535-1900), Firenze, Leo S. Olschki, 1937, in Fontes Ambrosiani in lucem editi cura et studio Bibliothecae Ambrosianae Moderante Johanne Galbiati, vol.XIX, pp.259-260.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup> CARLOS SOMMERVOGEL, SJ. Bibliothèque de la Compagnie de Jésus, t.III, Bruxelles-Paris 1892, col.1558. No other literary works are attributed to Gondi.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>42</sup> BERNARDINO FAINO, *Vita della Serva di Dio di beata memoria la Madre Angela Merici da Desenzano fondatrice della celebre Compagnia delle Vergini di Sant'Orsola di Brescia*, il cui Corpo riposa nella Chiesa di Sant'Afra. Scritta prima, e stampata dal P. Ottavio Gondio Fiorentino; poi riordinata, e corretta, et accresciuta dal Superiore Generale d'essa Compagnia. In Bologna, 1672. Per Gio. Recaldini; p.3. DONEDA, *Vita*, op. cit., p.16.

- Vita della Beata Angela Bresciana, prima fondatrice della Compagnia di S. Orsola di Brescia di nuovo rivista e corretta e confirmata dal Cardinale S. Carlo Borromeo, Arcivescovo di Milano. Composta dal Padre Ottavio Fiorentino, Brescia, appresso il Marchetti, 1605. In 8°. This Vita is indicated by the Biblioteca on p.259, and by Doneda who says, however, that he has never seen it (Vita, p.14). There does not seem to be any trace of it today.

We were not able to find the edition which, according to the brief reference to it in the *Bibliothèque* and the *Biblioteca* (mentioned above), would have been printed in Venice about 1618.

- Vita della Beata Angela Bresciana prima fondatrice della Compagnia di Sant'Orsola. Il cui Corpo è venerato nella Chiesa a basso Sant'Affra di Brescia. Composta dal molto Rever. P. Ottavio Fiorentino. In Brescia. Per Francesco Comincini 1619. A copy of this is in the Biblioteca Queriniana, classified 5°.H.IX.14. After the first "Preface", the 1581 letter from Cardinal Borromeo to the superiors and virgins of the Company has been inserted. This letter will be referred to in Pt.III, Ch.V. In this edition the Testament is published in the version with 13 Legacies.

At least two more editions of the *Vita* appeared in 1620, with the same title as the 1619 one. However, they do not contain the letter from the Cardinal of Milan; the *Testamento* has gone back to the form it had in the 1600 edition; and, what is even more important, they are published after the Rule:

- Regola della Compagnia di S. Orsola di Brescia già revista, et approvata dalla Santa et felicissima memoria di S. Carlo... Aggiuntovi la vita della B. Angela Fondatrice; co'l Sermone fatto alle Vergini Demesse, dal P.F. Paulo da Terni Predicatore Capuccino. Il giorno di Santa Caterina 1619. In Brescia, Appresso Pietro Maria Marchetti, 1620.

The Regola and the Vita each have their own frontispiece and pagination. The Regola, which covers pp.1-102, is followed by the Vita. The editor's dedication to Mgr Marino Giorgio, bishop of Brescia, is the same as the one that editor Sabbio had written for the first edition, but this one bears the initials P.M.M.(Pietro Maria Marchetti). Then follow: "Preface" (pp.5-10); "Book I" (pp.11-22); "Preface" (pp.23-26); "Book II" (pp.27-42); "Sermon given to the Virgins of St Ursula..." (pp.43-55).

A copy of each of these two editions of 1620 can be found in the Biblioteca Queriniana: one, classified 3°.I.XIII.17.m5, contains the same chronological error as in preceding editions, namely, giving the date of the death of Angela's father as 1516; the second one, classified SB.B.VIII.16.m3, does not repeat the error, as the sentence containing it has been dropped.

So far we have found no trace of the 1638 edition which, according to what Girolamo Lombardi wrote in his *Vita*, 43 would have been dedicated by Monti, the editor at Bologna, to Ippolita Volta Boncompagni.

We must say the same thing about the edition which was said to have been printed in Bologna in 1721. Mother Luisa Schiantarelli mentions this edition during the process-interrogation in 1757, when she lists the different editions of Gondi. The list, however, only gives approximate dates and places of printing,<sup>44</sup> therefore the information given could be inaccurate.

We have had to dwell a little on the fortunes of this work in Italy, as both here and abroad it enjoyed a wide success.

This was the period when the first Companies of St Ursula, the first little groups of Congregated Ursulines and the first monasteries of the Order of St Ursula were flourishing in France and Flanders, before spreading rapidly throughout Europe, and this explains the success of the first publications on Angela Merici.

At Liège in 1626 the first French biography appeared, at the request of the Ursulines of that city. In spite of our search, we did not succeed in finding a single copy of it. Lombardi affirms that Gondi's work "was also translated into the French tongue, and after all the approvals from the Ordinary was sent to the press in Liège in 1626, and came out dedicated to Monsignor Pier Luigi Caraffa, Apostolic Nuncio at Cologne". And he adds the note: "Gelenio refers to it in his *Colonia Agrippina*, p.600, and the Superior of the Ursulines of Landshout also mentions it in a letter dated 18 March 1758".45

This letter, still preserved in the AGUUR, is signed by Mother Marie Généreuse and says: "... the Life of our Blessed Mother Angela, the oldest one printed at Liège in 1626, is in very bad French; it calls her Ste Ange, even though the contents of the said book deal with the life and foundation of Blessed Mother Angela, our foundress". 46

The Summarium Additionale,<sup>47</sup> under n.4 of the second bibliographical list there, refers to this biography as: "Historia vitae Ven. Servae Dei impressa Leodii 1626. Idiomate gallico".

Sommervogel thinks that this Abrégé de la vie de la B. Ange, première

6

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup> LOMBARDI, Vita. op. cit., p.XII. DONEDA also (Vita. op. cit., p.15) mentions this reprint, with reference to t.III of the Analecta Bollandiana.

<sup>44</sup> APC. Vat. 339, f.235r.

<sup>45</sup> LOMBARDI, Vita, op. cit., p.XII and note (c).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>46</sup> AGUUR; Bc.86. One can gather from a number of letters that the Superior's name was Marie Généreuse Antonia de l'Incarnation de Jésus Christ Fraporta.
<sup>47</sup> D37.

Fondatrice de la Compagnie de Ste Ursule 48 is a translation of Gondi's Vita.

Nor was it possible to find the *Vie* printed under the name of Father Odo de Gissey (1567-1643), Jesuit, professor of moral theology and superior of the house at Aubenas. Mother Luisa Schiantarelli, postulatrix of the cause for the beatification of Angela Merici, numbers it among the works put at the disposal of the examining commission which had been called together for the process.<sup>49</sup> This *Vie* had been published in Paris in 1634.

Father de Backer, who is quoted by Sommervogel, refers to it as a "Traduction de l'ouvrage italien du P. Octave de Gondi sj", which Fr de Gissey would have had printed himself in 1648. Fr de Gissey, however, had died in 1643.<sup>50</sup>

# e) Jean-Hugues Quarré (?-1656)

This priest, who later became a member of the Oratory in France, was born in Franche-Comté, a province still under Spanish rule. He was afterwards sent by his superiors to the Low Countries, which likewise were ruled over by Spain. A fervent defender of Jansenist propositions, he was friendly with Jansen, with Saint-Cyran and with Jacques Boonen, the Jansenist archbishop of Malines. When Boonen obtained for the Oratorians in Belgium a certain independence vis-à-vis the Oratory in France, Quarré very soon became their major superior.

In 1648 he published a biography of Angela Merici:

- La vie de la Bienheureuse Mère Angèle Première Fondatrice de la Compagnie de S.te Ursule. Enrichie de plusieurs remarques et pratiques de piété, très-utiles pour la conduite de toutes sortes de personnes à la Vertu, par le R.P. Iean Hugues Quarré Prestre de la Congregation de l'Oratoire de Iésus, Docteur en Théologie, A Paris, chez Sébastien Hure, rue sainct Iacques, au Coeur-Bon, 1648: pp.[34] + 582; 15 x 8.5cm; there is a copy in the Bibliothèque Royale Albert Ier at Brussels, classified III, 82784.

Philippe Annaert, from Louvain University, has kindly passed on to us his own unpublished notes on the author. In them he puts forward some suggestions about the possible identity of whoever had commis-

<sup>49</sup> ODON DE GISSEY, Histoire de Ste Ursule, ensemble la Vie de la B. Angèle..., à Paris, 1634, in LOMBARDI, Vita, op. cit., p.360. Cf. also SOMMERVOGEL, Bibliothèque, op. cit., t.III, col.1468.

<sup>50</sup> SOMMERVOGEL, *Ibid.*, col.1468-1469.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>48</sup> Abrégé de la vie de la B. Ange, première fondatrice de la Compagnie de Ste Ursule. Nouvellement traduit d'italien en françois en faveur des vierges religieuses ursulines de la cité de Liège. Avec un autre abbrégé d'une fort substantieuse praticque de la perfection chrestienne. A Liège, Jean Tournay, 1626, 12°, pp.144 et 236 sans la dédicace et la table. Sommervogel, t.III, col.1558.

sioned the work. One must not be led astray by the fact that the editor is from Paris: this was probably the editor for the Oratory, who had also been responsible for printing other books from Quarré. But the Ursulines of Faubourg Saint-Jacques could not have been the recipients as, at that particular time, they were no longer in contact with the Oratorians,<sup>51</sup> and what is more, their own link with Angela Merici had been forgotten at the time of their transformation into enclosed nuns of the Order of St Ursula.<sup>52</sup> The same reasons hold good for the Ursulines of other monasteries belonging to the Congregation of Paris, as for example, Saint-Omer (founded in 1626) and Lille (founded in 1642).

It would seem as if the Ursulines of Liège must be excluded, too, as they had already had a biography of Angela Merici printed in 1626, and also those at Dinant (1627) and at Huy (1638), who were closely linked to Liège.

A more valid theory could be advanced from the following facts:

- on 6 March 1627, the Ursulines at Poligny established a house at Salins; now Quarré was the superior of the Oratory at Salins from 1629 to 1631;
- on 19 March 1656, Jean-Hugues Quarré added a codicil to his will: in it he bequeathed a sum of money to the superior, or to Sister Jeanne de Jésus, of the monastery of Salins, to have some masses said.
- on the other hand, the Ursulines at Poligny, who had founded Salins, had as one of their members, in 1648, a Mother Anne du Saint-Sacrement Quarré.

Perhaps it is for one of these two communities that Father Quarré wrote his book. We do not know. We only know that the superior of Poligny wrote to the Ursulines at Dijon on 15 June 1756, asking them for a book on the "venerable Mother", adding the detail: "Nous en avons un très encien par le Rd père Caré Père de l'oratoire, mais en Gaulois".<sup>53</sup>

Philippe Annaert has also put forward another theory: in 1644 the Ursulines had settled at Mons, in Flanders. Round about 1660 they turned to Bernardino Faino, asking him for information about "blessed"

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>51</sup> MARIE-ANDRÉE JÉGOU, Les Ursulines du Faubourg St. Jacques à Paris 1607-1662, Avant-propos de Jean Orcibal. Presses Universitaires de France, 1981. Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études Section des Sciences Religieuses, vol.LXXXII, pp.30-31.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>53</sup> For Poligny and Salins, cf. Les Chroniques de l'Ordre des Ursulines recueillies pour l'usage des Religieuses du mesme Ordre. Par M.D.P.U. [Mère de Pommereu Ursuline]. A Paris, chez Iean Henault, Imprimeur-iuré, rue S. Jacques à l'Ange Gardien, 1673. In three parts. Part II, pp.307-309. For the Testament, cf. Malines, Chapter Archives of the cathedral Saint-Rombaut, file Testaments, J.H. Quarré, 1656. Pointed out by Patrick de Greef of Louvain University. For Mother Quarré, cf. Chroniques, op. cit., Pt.II, p.426. For Poligny's letter, cf. AGUUR, Bc.161.

Angela. In his reply, Faino suggested that they should turn to Guillaume de Blitterswijk, protector of the Ursulines at Ruremonde, who some years before had been sent information and Rules, with a view to writing a complete life of Angela. However, none of the bibliographies concerning Blitterswijk attributes a "Life" of Angela Merici to him. Faino even added at the end of his note to Mons: "And in case this gentleman should have the new 'Life' printed, try and obtain a copy. In fact, try and get at least two copies for us and send them on, as they would be a treasure to us, even though they would be written in the French language, the mother-tongue of that Country".<sup>54</sup>

Taking into account that the Oratorians also had a house at Mons, would Guillaume de Blitterswijk by any chance have asked Quarré to

write this biography?

There was a copy of Quarré's Vie in the Ursuline library at Cologne (today this is in the Bibliothèque Royale Albert Ier in Brussels), and there was another at Valenciennes, where an abridged version of it was published in 1656 in an anonymous work: La gloire de Ste Ursule.

We know that in the 18th century the Ursulines of the Monastery of Via Vittoria at Rome used to read extracts from Quarré's work to their

boarders.

We will have to return to this work of Quarré later on, because some of his conclusions are not tenable when subjected to a close examination. Moreover, he brings condemnation on himself when he

describes the method he used in its composition.

Surprising, in fact, is the candour with which he expresses his own reactions when he read Gondi's *Vita* (perhaps in the Liège edition): "Tadvouë que ie fus touché à la lecture du livre, dautant que ie voyois en cette Vie l'éclat de certaines lumières extraordinaires qui estoient couvertes d'un nuage assez facile à dissiper, et qui me paroissoient trèsimportantes pour la gloire de Dieu, et utiles pour la consolation des Religieuses et des âmes devotes".<sup>55</sup>

"... l'Autheur qui l'a autrefois écrite semble n'avoir voulu faire qu'un abregé et un simple narré autant obscur que stérile; mais pour peu que l'on y fasse de réflexion, l'on découvre les tresors de grâce et de

55 QUARRÉ, Vie, op. cit., Préface, p.[17-18]. The pages of the "Epistre" and the "Préface" are not

numbered.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>54</sup> "Et in caso quel Signore havesse stampata la nova Vita, procurare d'haverla. Et procurarne ancora almeno due Copie per noi, et mandarle, che le stimaremo come un tesoro, benché fossero composte in lingua francese, ch'è la lingua materna di quel Paese". AGUUR preserves an autograph of FAINO: "Relatione della Veneranda Compagnia di Sant'Orsola di Brescia alle Religiose Orsoline di Mans [sic] le quali n'hanno fatta istanza", January 1661, 5 folios recto-verso.

vertus que Dieu avoit caché dans cette âme d'élection. I'ay donc travaillé sur ce plan".56

"... i'ay pris le soin d'éclaircir ce qui estoit le plus obscur et me suis estudié de mettre en ordre ce qui paroissoit confus, et apporter un peu de iour à beaucoup de choses qui me sembloient obscures et cachées".<sup>57</sup>

According to his own statement, the criterion followed by Quarré was that of "expliquer plustost que d'escrire la Vie de la B. Angèle". He states that he has based himself chiefly on Father Ottavio Fiorentino, an Italian; 59 but the few pages of Gondi have become 582 under Quarré's pen, without mentioning the 34 pages of introduction.

Taking the author's statements quoted above into consideration, the reader must exercise the greatest caution vis-à-vis his method of work. We will not fail to draw attention, in the appropriate place, to some of his arbitrary viewpoints and conclusions. At times he reveals a superficial knowledge of Gondi's *Vita*. What is more, under the emotive impulse of having, so he thinks, rediscovered as it deserved to be, a neglected or unappreciated saintly life, he slips into unfortunate inaccuracies and exaggerations.

Quarré's Vie de la B. Angèle was the only large-scale Merician biography written in French and some pages of spiritual commentary have a certain appeal. These two factors helped to make the work appreciated; the Chroniques de l'Ordre des Ursulines published not only a large extract from the Preface, but also the most relevant biographical passages, under the title of: La Vie de la Mère Angèle de Bresse, première institutrice de l'Ordre des Ursulines tirée du Livre de sa Vie, composée par le R.P. Hugues Quarré, Prestre de l'Oratoire, sur l'Italien du R.P. Ottavio Fiorentino.

The same thing happened for the Italian edition of the *Chroniques*.<sup>60</sup> Then Father Boeck, sJ, translated this extract into German; it was printed in 1720, as is mentioned briefly in a letter dated 19 February 1757, from the superior of the Ursulines at Landshut (already referred to) to the Ursulines of the Monastery at Rome.<sup>61</sup>

The Chronicles helped to circulate the extract and this could explain why Quarré's work was not re-printed and why the complete text, probably found to be too wordy, was not translated into other languages.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid. Préface, p.[21].57 Ibid. Préface, p.[31].

Ibid. Epistre, p.[10].
 Ibid. Préface, p.[31].

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>60</sup> Cf. Chroniques, op. cit., Pt.I, pp.21-33. For the Italian edition cf. Le Croniche dell'Ordine delle Religiose Orsoline raccolte per uso dell'istess'Ordine, da M.D.P.U. [Mère de Pommereu Ursuline] in lingua francese. Tradotte nell'Italiano a dilatazione dell'istesso Sant'Ordine. Prima parte, Trattato primo. In Venezia, 1705, Domenico Lovisa, pp.17-25.

<sup>61</sup> AGUUR, Bc. 86.

In connection with this, we would like to quote an opinion expressed by the Ursulines at Dijon to those at Rome, in a letter they wrote on 12 July 1756 concerning the devotion to "blessed" Angela: "... nous avons encore sa vie imprimée en Italien et une autre écritte par Mr Hugues Quarré de l'Oratoire qui est remplie de tant de comentaires et de réflexion que le lecteur en est ennuyé".62

## f) Bernardino Faino (?-1673)

Brescian,<sup>63</sup> with a late priestly vocation, Faino became deputy and then superior general of the Company of St Ursula at Brescia. Having "discovered and brought to light some interesting facts hitherto unknown",<sup>64</sup> he wanted to make these "interesting facts" known through a biography of Angela Merici:

- Vita della Serva di Dio di beata memoria la Madre Angela Merici da Desenzano fondatrice della celebre Compagnia delle Vergini di Sant'Orsola di Brescia, il cui Corpo riposa nella Chiesa di Sant'Afra. Scritta prima, e stampata dal P. Ottavio Gondio Fiorentino; poi riordinata, e corretta, et accresciuta dal Superiore Generale d'essa Compagnia. In Bologna, 1672. Per Gio. Recaldini.

This biography consists of 88 pages, numbered separately, even though it follows the printed Regola della Compagnia delle Vergini di S. Orsola di Brescia. La quale può servire anco ad altre Città, essendo meglio espressa, et ordinata per commodo, e beneficio universale. Con la Vita della Madre Angela Merici sua Fondatrice di Beata memoria, In Bologna, 1672. Per Gio. Recaldini. The Regola consists of 200 pages, 182 of which are numbered ([18] + 182).

Before writing his biography, Faino devoted himself to archive-research, to transcriptions from documents, and to noting carefully anything of interest about Angela Merici and her institution. There is ample evidence of this in his handwritten work *Brescia Beata* 65 and in his *Miscellanea*.66

Antonio Cistellini says he was a well-read and devoted historian, a good and learned man.<sup>67</sup> His ponderous work certainly reflects a deep

<sup>62</sup> AGUUR, Bc. 54

<sup>63</sup> Cf. supra, Ch.I, 2.b.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>64</sup> DONEDA, Vita, op. cit., p. 19. "... rinvenute e date alla luce alcune buone notizie, che stavano occulte".

<sup>65</sup> BQ, ms.E.I.2,3,5 passim.

<sup>66</sup> BQ, ms.K.VI.1.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>67</sup> Antonio Cistellini, Figure della Riforma Pretridentina, Brescia, Morcelliana, 1948, p.34.

piety and a lively interest in the ecclesiastical history of Brescia, as well as a marked admiration for Angela Merici. Doneda says of him that "he has indeed rendered a service to the Ecclesiastical History of Brescia, not so much by what he has written, as by what he has collected together and preserved". One wonders if Doneda is referring here to the biography of Angela or if it is not rather to the Regola which precedes it (in the 1672 edition) and which we will discuss later.

Lombardi recalls that in 1671 a handwritten copy of the *Vita* was sent by Faino himself to the Elector of Bavaria who had asked him for it.<sup>69</sup> Then during the process of canonisation, this same manuscript was sent for in Rome. We have proof of this in a letter of 1 October 1757, written by the above-mentioned superior of Landshut: "On nous demande icy la vie de la Bienheureuse Mère Angèle, disant qu'on la souhaitoit à Rome; c'est un manuscrit que les Religieuses Ursulines de Bresse ont envoyé à feu l'Electeur Ferdinant Marie l'an 1671. Je m'en étonne, puis que ce ne peut être qu'une copie traduite de l'italien, ayant sa vie imprimée en françois de l'an 1676. Toute-fois si pouvoit être utile ou nécessaire, je me ferai un plaisir de l'envoyer au plutot que possible".<sup>70</sup> During the interrogation of 27 July 1758, Mother Schiantarelli stated that she had, in fact, received it from the Ursulines of Landshut.<sup>71</sup>

If, at this point, we were asked for our opinion on Merician historiography in its broad outlines, we would have to say that Bellintani, Gondi and Faino advance in the same direction, with the same honesty of purpose, and also with the same desire for truth. But the first two lack any methodological approach, while Faino has the advantage over them in this respect, and also gives some information, the source of which is lost today. On the other hand, however, certain of his statements are sometimes surprisingly naive.

Teresa Ledóchowska, in the Bibliography in her Vol.I, mentions some minor authors, who for various reasons took an interest in Angela Merici before her beatification. As for ourselves, we preferred to deal only with those whom hagiographers and biographers of Merician historiography refer to generally. And we will do the same for the later centuries.

69 LOMBARDI, Vita, op. cit., pp.XII-XIII, note (n).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>68</sup> DONEDA, *Vita, op. cit.*, p.19: "molto benemerito della Storia Ecclesiastica di Brescia per ciò che ha raccolto e conservato, ma non egualmente per quello che ha scritto".

AGUUR, Bc. 86. ms.
 APC. Vat. 339, f.235v.

### 2. 18TH AND 19TH CENTURIES

In the second half of the 18th century the processes of beatification and canonisation of Angela Merici, with the strict procedures laid down by the Roman Curia, encouraged documentary research and revived, with the devotion, also interest in Angela as a person. Her biographers' attention became more penetrating and their judgment more discerning, even if the inevitable tribute was still paid to certain stylistic modes of expression favoured in hagiography and in the spiritual attitudes of the age. There was a growing concern to adhere more closely to the historical reality as offered by the documents, which were approached in a new spirit of enquiry; but the necessary references to the background where Angela Merici lived and the Company of St Ursula was born were lacking, and it was not yet known where to situate the documents. Doneda and Lombardi mark the high point of Merician historiography in the 18th century.

## a) Carlo Doneda (1701-1781)

The first Merician biography in which events and documents are treated with a critical sensitivity is Doneda's:

- Vita della B. Angela Merici da Desenzano Fondatrice della Compagnia di Sant'Orsola scritta da Carlo Doneda Sacerdote Bresciano. In Brescia, 1768. Dalle stampe di Giambattista Bossini; 182 pages ([4]+178); in 8°. There is a copy of it in the Biblioteca Queriniana, classified X.X.3.

"Another edition", consisting of 142 pages, in 16°, – the first having undergone some revision after the death of Doneda – was published in Brescia in 1822: Vita di S. Angela Merici da Desenzano, Fondatrice della Compagnia di S. Orsola, scritta dal fu reverendo signor Don Carlo Doneda sacerdote bresciano, altra edizione, Brescia, per Gaetano Venturini, 1822.

Carlo Doneda had received his early professional experience reorganising the Capitular Archives of Brescia,<sup>72</sup> and then had been appointed librarian of the Queriniana in 1757. He was present at the ordinary process of beatification, acting as the fiscal Promoter of the Curia of Brescia, and at the apostolic process of canonisation, as Sub-Promoter of the faith. These experiences gave him a "habitus" of professional soundness,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>72</sup> For this and other biographical information, cf. introduction to C. DONEDA, *Notizie della Zecca e delle Monete di Brescia*, ediz. 2ª, corredata di note ed accresciuta della Tavola delle Monete, e di una nuova Cronaca da Guid'Antonio Zanetti. Bologna, nella Stamperia di Lelio dalla Volpe, 1786.

which inspires confidence, and of which he gives proof in his choice of

documents and in the way he interprets them.

He had been "entrusted by the Mother General of the Company of St Ursula at Brescia to go through the Archives of the Company very thoroughly", as he himself put it,<sup>73</sup> in order to extract anything that might be useful at the Roman process of canonisation. And he adds: "At the same time I was also entrusted with preparing for print a new Life of Blessed Angela, since all the copies of the Lives written by Gondi and Faino were scattered, and there were no longer any of them to be found for sale, and it was not deemed prudent to get either of them reprinted ...".

"... I have tried to recount, in a clear, simple way, the worthy deeds in the life of the Blessed Merici, treating them according to the succession of years, in so far as this has been possible, given the obscurity shrouding them ... At times I have had to break off and use my own judgment because, in general, the Writers themselves are very seldom in total agreement, so it has been necessary either to find, if possible, some interpretation which will bring them together, or to make a choice between the different accounts.... In the most important places, I report the Authors' exact words ... Hence in the first place, the Readers will be able to check my scrupulous fidelity; and then they will know how to judge for themselves the degree of credibility each fact deserves, by weighing carefully the authorities upon which it rests ...".<sup>74</sup>

The Vita is accompanied by copious notes of a historical nature,

contained in the appendix to the biography, from pp.125-178.

Guerrini gives this opinion about Doneda: "Without literary frills, but with vast erudition and shrewd perception, Doneda has constructed for the biography of St Angela a good, solid platform, which is still standing and has lasted well, and upon which all later biographers have

<sup>73</sup> DONEDA, *Vita, op. cit.*, p.21: "incaricato dalla Madre generale della Compagnia di S. Orsola di Brescia di sviscerare l'Archivio di essa Compagnia".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>74</sup> Ibidem, pp.21-24 passim: "In tale occasione a me venne ancora commessa la cura di preparar per le stampe una nuova Vita della Beata, giacché tutti gli esemplari delle Vite composte dal P. Gondi e dal Faino erano dispersi, né più se ne ritrovano di vendibili, e neppure si giudicò prudente consiglio rimettere o l'una o l'altra sotto de' torchi...".

<sup>&</sup>quot;... Ho procurato di riferire con uno stile piano e semplice le gesta della Beata Merici, distribuendole giusta la serie degli anni, per quanto mi è stato permesso dall'oscurità in cui sono involte... Ho dovuto arrestarmi talvolta, ed usare la critica, perché gli Scrittori medesimi non sogliono andar quasi mai così perfettamente d'accordo, che non sia d'uopo o di qualche interpretazione per conciliarli insieme se si può, o di fare i loro varii racconti... A luoghi più importanti, rapporto le precise parole degli Autori... Quindi i Leggitori primieramente si accerteranno della mia scrupolosa fedeltà; di poi sapranno da se medesimi giudicare qual grado di credenza si meriti ciascun fatto, ponderando le autorità su cui si appoggia...".

built".75 We can fully endorse this opinion. Lombardi, who follows shortly after Doneda, values his "judicious critical sense and singular erudition", and continues: "As for myself, I am indeed very indebted to him; I owe more to him alone than to all the rest put together, because it is from him alone that I have found out a great deal of information, which it would have been futile on my part to have looked for anywhere else".76

These statements make it all the more regrettable that Doneda, although he had access to so many documents at first hand, did not make greater use of them. He could have given us, in fact, a much fuller treatment of the life of St Angela, and left us a more complete record of these same documents.

## b) Girolamo Lombardi (1707-1792)

Born at Verona, Girolamo Lombardi had joined the Venetian province of the Company of Jesus in 1722. At Rome he had attracted the attention of Benedict XIV, who made use of his services to get his own works published. He had also been a member of the Academy of Arcadians.<sup>77</sup> Thus, he was more of an editor, a commentator, and compiler of analytical indexes, than an actual writer.

At the request of the Ursulines of the monastery in Rome, who were trying to advance the cause of canonisation of the one whom they had always looked upon as their first mother and foundress, Lombardi wrote a biography of Angela:

- Vita della B. Angela Merici Fondatrice della Compagnia di Sant'Orsola, scritta da Girolamo Lombardi sacerdote veronese, In Venezia, 1778. Dedicata a Sua Eccellenza il N.U. Gio. Francesco Pisani Procurator di S. Marco.

This biography is undoubtedly the most documented, but too much petty detail, the "professional vice" of the typical collector, at times obscures the clarity of the text. However, this attention to detail, pedantic in some ways, is today, after an interval of two centuries when so many

<sup>77</sup> SOMMERVOGEL, op. cit., t.IV, col.1926-1928.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>75</sup> GUERRINI, S. Angela, op. cit., p.XI: "Senza lenocinii letterari, ma con vasta erudizione e con discernimento sagace, il Doneda ha gettato per la biografia di S.Angela una solida piattaforma, che ancora dura e resiste, e sulla quale hanno poi edificato tutti i biografi posteriori".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>76</sup> LOMBARDI, Vita, op. cit., p.XIII. "... critica giudiciosa e rara erudizione... Io certo per me gli sono tenuto moltissimo, e più debbo a lui solo, che a tutti unitamente, avendo in lui solo trovate parecchie notizie, che inutile sarebbe stato qualunque studio volendole cercare altrove". In the note on p.203, Lombardi quotes Doneda, Notizie manoscritte mandate a Roma in occasion dei Processi della B. Angela. This manuscript has not been found up to date.

of the documents have been dispersed, the most valuable feature of the work.

The author is given the title "sacerdote veronese" in the frontispiece, without any reference to his belonging to the Company of Jesus, as this had been suppressed in 1773.

The volume, in quarto, consists of XXVIII pages of introduction + 386 pages. It has the benefit of a "Chronological Index" (pp.353-356); an "Index of Authors and other Books referred to in the Life of Blessed Angela" (pp.357-366); and an "Index of notable things to be found in the Life of Blessed Angela" (pp.367-385). There is a copy of it in the BQ, classified SB.A.III.25.

Girolamo Lombardi had consulted all the Merician literature and all the documentation which had been collected together in Rome for the canonical processes. It can be seen from what remains of his correspondence with Mother Luisa Schiantarelli, postulatrix of the cause, 78 and with Father Francesco from Desenzano, one of those responsible for the process in the diocesses of Brescia and Verona, 79 that he followed with assiduity and interest all the different phases of the process, thanks to the printed sections of the "Positiones".

Lombardi reconstructs facts and draws conclusions from them with scrupulous care, making use of all the material he has at his disposal; he quotes this material conscientiously, juxtaposing, comparing and discussing everything. But he does not evaluate his sources before using them; there is no selection, everything goes in. This results in muddled pages, where evidence of unequal value comes pouring out, sometimes in a rather chaotic way. One could say that the author was anxious not to let any detail escape him, no matter how insignificant.

His Vita, weighed down by so much learning, certainly does not make easy reading. However, it must be consulted by anyone who wants to get as full a picture as possible of all the literary works of a historical nature relating to St Angela, and also of the various problems raised by this output. For the most part, too, Lombardi appears to be accurate and objective in the way he interprets the documents.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>78</sup> Cf. 90 letters. AGUUR, Bd. LOMBARDI.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>79</sup> Cf. Venice, Archivio Seminario Patriarcale (ASPV), Sala Monico XXa, ms.786,4. The material comes from an archive-collection named after Jacopo Alberti, a cultured lawyer, who had been particularly interested in the canonical process for the beatification and canonisation of Angela Merici.

## c) Germano Jacopo Gussago (1747-1827)

In the Biblioteca Queriniana there is a manuscript entitled:

- Notizie storico-critiche intorno alla Vita di Angela Merici da Desenzano Fondatrice della Compagnia delle Orsoline, ms.K.V.19 (originally ms.Ducos n.116).

This manuscript consists of 89 pages, and is in a beautiful handwriting, possibly a copy in readiness for printing. It bears no author's name, but is attributed to Germano Jacopo Gussago. Nor is it dated, but it must have been completed after 7 September 1808, since it includes the Decretal Letter of the canonisation of St Angela which is dated 24 May 1807, followed by the attestation of the vicar-general of Brescia, confirming its agreement with the printed Brief; but this attestation is dated

7 September 1808.

The text is not preceded by any preface or dedicatory letter. The author follows the *Vita* of Lombardi very closely, even using the same words as Lombardi. When notes have to be added, he uses Lombardi's, without quoting him, but cites the sources Lombardi had drawn on as if he were using the information first-hand. Sometimes entire passages are given, word for word or nearly, with just the occasional replacement of out-dated phrases, without any indication marks which should show that it is a copy. As a result, although this work is certainly more readable than the original of Lombardi, it is really only a shortened version of the latter, without this being stated. Did the author intend giving some indication or other about his close dependence on Lombardi? Perhaps.

We would not have considered this manuscript, if it had not been quoted by Giuditta Bertolotti (referred to earlier). 80 She refers to an opinion expressed, she says, by Cesare Cantù in "Grande Illustrazione del Lombardo-Veneto": "The feast of Angela's canonisation induced Gussago to write a historical treatise about this saintly fellow-citizen. He makes critical comparisons between the first biographers, checking the various items of information with scrupulous exactitude. His work truly deserves the adjective 'critical', and is one of the most scholarly works to appear on St Angela". And G. Bertolotti continues: "Prof. Guerrini (n.1) agrees with this favourable opinion and confirms that Gussago shows excellent discernment in his evaluation of information about the Saint". 81

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>80</sup> BERTOLOTTI, *Storia, op. cit.*, ediz. 1923 and 1926, pp.11-12. The review of Cantù would be in the "Grande Illustrazione del Lombardo-Veneto", V, III. Milano, 1858, p.152. We were not able to find it.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>81</sup> The note (1) of G. Bertolotti refers to the periodical "Il Poverello d'Assisi ed il Santo dei Poveri";

In fact, even just a superficial knowledge of Lombardi (necessary for anyone who wants to write the history of Angela Merici), would have made G. Bertolotti and Guerrini have serious reservations about this work of Gussago, so clearly indebted to that of Lombardi.

## d) Filippo Maria Salvatori (1740-1824)

A Jesuit since 1754, and an ordinary priest during the years when the Company of Jesus was suppressed, Salvatori was able to resume the Jesuit life at Naples as soon as the Order was restored. He was appointed one of their ministers, first at Palermo and then at Rome, where he died at the Gesù on 7 November 1824. Sommervogel 82 gives the names of several of his publications: some "Lives", such as those of Ven. Veronica da Cortona, of Ven. Anna di S. Agostino, a Carmelite, and of Bl. Leonardo da Porto Maurizio, are extracted from Acts of the canonical Processes; other "Lives" are adaptations from earlier authors, such as the abridged lives of St Aloysius Gonzaga and of St Francis Xavier. Salvatori must have enjoyed a certain success, as some of his works were re-printed several times and even sometimes translated.

His biography of St Angela also met with quite considerable success:

- Vita della Santa Madre Angela Merici fondatrice della Compagnia di S. Orsola ossia dell'Instituto delle Orsoline, scritta dal P. Filippo Maria Salvatori della Compagnia di Gesù, in Roma 1807. Presso Lazzarini Stampatore della Rev. Camera Apostolica.

The book measures 27 x 20cm, and consists of VIII + 270 pages. It is a popular work written, as is indicated in the dedication to Pope Pius VII, with the aim of holding up the saintly life of Angela "for the admiration and imitation of the Faithful".<sup>83</sup>

Salvatori belongs to the "school" of Doneda-Lombardi with regard to the contents, but he does not follow the same method, as he has no critical intention in mind. He has no kind of notes; he only points out sometimes, within the context, the author or source to which he is referring, but these indications are brief and give no bibliographical or archive reference.

83 SALVATORI, Vita, op. cit., p.IV.

anno IX, n.5. Brescia, maggio 1907. We give the passage referred to in full: "GUSSAGO JACOPO, Notizie storico-critiche intorno alla vita di Angela Merici da Desenzano fondatrice della Compagnia delle Orsoline. Bibl. Queriniana, manoscritto Ducos n.116; autografo dell'A, già preparato per la stampa. Il p. Gussago è di una esattezza scrupolosa nel vagliare le notizie su S. Angela Merici, e queste memorie meritano davvero il nome di critiche, come meriterebbero l'onore della stampa".

<sup>82</sup> SOMMERVOGEL, op. cit., ed. 1896, t.VII, col.490-495.

Taken as a whole, and within the limits of a popular work, this book has its use. In addition, it has the merit of including a large number of documents, such as: the *Ricordi* and the *Testamento* of Angela Merici, which the author has brought to light by taking them from the copy of the Processes (made from Cozzano's manuscript); the *Regola*, but it is the one adapted by Charles Borromeo at Brescia in 1582 and republished by Cristoni in 1673,84 by then reduced from 26 to 25 chapters. Salvatori, as a matter of fact, has omitted the *Ricordi* which appeared in Ch.21, on the following grounds: "... in part because this is the way they are recorded in the Summary presented to the Sacred Congregation of Rites, and in part because they form a separate section of instruction, well suited to anyone who has the direction of souls consecrated to God" (p.206). Also to be added to these documents are the Bull of Paul III, some Briefs and the Decree of canonisation.

Sommervogel cites a French translation of it: Vie de Sainte Angèle de Merici, fondatrice des Ursulines, traduite de l'Italien sur l'imprimé à Rome chez Lazzarini 1807, par M. Allibert, chanoine de Saint-Jean de Lyon. Lyon et Paris, Périsse frères, 1847, 12°, pp.XXIII +320.

Recently an English translation has been made:

- Angela by Sister Marie di Mercurio osu. A translation from the original Italian Vita della Santa Madre Angela Merici by Filippo Maria Salvatori, sj. The Ursulines of Brown County, Saint Martin, Ohio, 1970.

#### 3. 20TH CENTURY

The invitation sent out by the Vatican Council II to Institutes of consecrated life, urging them "to return to the sources", has aroused during these last decades a renewed and lively interest in Angela Merici on the part of all Ursulines. But already in the first half of the 20th century, the 4th centenary of the Merician foundation in 1935 and of the death of the Foundress in 1940, had focussed the attention of religious circles throughout the world on Angela.

Not all the works which we are going to introduce in this section commemorate an occasion, but the occasion certainly helped to make them better known. Connected with these works was a whole series of various and numerous minor literary works which had a wide circulation, but these at times contain interpretations which require some discussion.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. infra, Pt.III, Ch.V.

It would be overstepping our purpose to pass judgment on all this output: devotional, hagiographical, commemorative works and essays. Therefore, as in the preceding sections, we will limit ourselves to pointing out only those works which stand out as land-marks in Merician historiography.

## a) Giuditta Bertolotti in Garioni (1893-1985)

Giuditta Bertolotti, when a student in search of a subject for her degree thesis, and herself a native of the region of Lake Garda, agreed to study Angela Merici. Her work, presented to the College of Professors of the Academy of Science and Arts at Milan in 1919, received the highest approval. From this came the idea of publishing a book "without the pedantic erudition of the thesis", as she put it on p.XI of the Preface; a book which would "not be a biography like the others, but the story of the ideal service which Angela Merici carried out in her own day and in the history of humanity". Thus appeared the book:

- GIUDITTA BERTOLOTTI, Storia di S. Angela Merici Vergine Bresciana, (1474-1540), Brescia, Tipografia e Libreria Queriniana, 1923. This first edition consists of XII + 249 pages: there is a copy of it in the Queriniana, classified SB.B.VII.7.

A second edition, "revised and corrected", likewise printed at the Queriniana, Brescia, Libreria Editrice Vescovile, 1926, has the same number of pages.

Two other editions appeared later:

- GIUDITTA GARIONI BERTOLOTTI, S. Angela Merici Vergine Bresciana, III edizione rifatta. Prefazione di Mons. Paolo Guerrini, Queriniana, Brescia. 1950.
- GIUDITTA GARIONI BERTOLOTTI, S. Angela Merici Vergine Bresciana, Editrice Àncora, Milano, 1971.

Giuditta Bertolotti had one merit, that of placing Angela, her fellow-citizen, in her historical, geographical and social setting. Furthermore, she had a great desire in mind, to reconstruct the human events of the Saint's life on the foundation of archive-documents.

Somehow this plan does not seem to have been fully realised. We were not able to consult the thesis in its original wording; therefore, we cannot judge if the printed edition has kept any of the scientific discipline, and how much, but it seems legitimate to us to doubt it. For example, G. Bertolotti quotes documents belonging to the Company which were already lost in her time, but she quotes them as if she had been able

to consult them directly, and she extrapolates passages from them as if she had them at hand, without giving any indication of the source she has drawn on. In the later editions after 1926, she corrects some of this bibliographical information, but in such a way that one is led to believe that the original archive-source material was lost after this date.

The 1950 and 1971 editions, completely revised, bear little resemblance to the first two editions. They are really only fictional biographies, where the aim to popularise has replaced the scientific intention. Their only service was to make the figure of Angela Merici better known. Even in the first editions there is a similar lack of scientific approach in the way the documents are introduced in the Appendix. Actually, G. Bertolotti takes the *Vita e morte della B. Suor Angela Merici* and the *Justificationi* (both of them by Nazari) from the manuscript in the Queriniana already referred to, ms.D.VII.20, entitled *Di vari Santi Bresciani*. She keeps 1560 as the date for the *Vita*, as it is written in this manuscript, and for the *Justificationi*, which came before the *Vita*, she gives the year 1568 (which is exact), without being aware of the discrepancy. In addition, in the original text the short introductions to each process-interrogation are in Latin; the author makes a synthesis of them in Italian, without letting the reader know this.

She gives no indication of the source of the other two documents published in the appendix, namely, Tribesco's testimony and the extract

from Landini's letter.86

The author has kept the same "Appendice di Documenti" in the later editions; she should have at least indicated that important source-material had been discovered during the intervening period, and explained why she had not taken it into account.

And then, in the 1971 edition, she has added to these documents of a historical nature one of the writings of Luigi Fossati, L'opera e la personalità di S. Angela, but it is not clear why this has been placed here and

there are some basic errors in it.

## b) Cecylja Łubieńska (1874-1937)

Mother Cecylja Łubieńska, superior general of the Ursulines of the Polish Union,<sup>87</sup> devoted herself indefatigably to the search for documents regarding St Angela. With the help of Monsignor Paolo Guerrini, she dis-

 <sup>85</sup> Cf. supra, Ch.I, 2.b.
 86 Cf. supra, Ch.II, 1.a.

<sup>87</sup> The Polish Union entered the Roman Union in 1936.

covered the Secondo Libro Generale 88 in the State Archives at Brescia. In the Biblioteca Queriniana, she found a copy of the Regola printed by Damiano Turlino 89 and a manuscript of the Risposta contro quelli persuadono la clausura by Cozzano.90 From the Atti del Processo she brought to light the other writings of Cozzano.91

We have only the first volume of Mother Cecylja's intended work

of two volumes:

- Święta Aniela Merici i jej Dzieło [St Angela Merici and her Work] I. Ojczyzna św. Anieli i jej Życie [The Country of St Angela and her Life],

Kraków, 1935. This volume consists of LXVIII + 373 pp.

It contains a review of the sources and works (pp.VII-XXXIV), the Bibliography (pp.XXXVII-LXVIII) and an introduction on "The Spirit of the Time". The Appendix includes the Regola of Turlino, with the translation in Polish opposite; the Ricordi and the Testamento taken from the APC. Vat.; Angela's act of election, dated 18 March 1537, taken from the Secondo Libro Generale; the Bull of Paul III found in an edition of the Rule published at Brescia in 1620; some extracts from the three writings of Cozzano and the two writings of Nazari; an index of names.

Referring to the work as a whole, Guerrini gives as his view that "it does not add anything of importance to the biography of St Angela.... Even so, it is the best and most complete history of St Angela

Merici".92

The first part of this opinion should have been kinder: it is certainly true that the background reconstruction is very prolix, but at the same time it is well documented and has made a notable contribution to the biography by placing the Saint in a more realistic setting, the result being a kind of interaction between them, from which they emerge reciprocally enriched.

On the other hand, we fully share the second part of Guerrini's opinion. The pages entitled "Ocena źródeł i opracowań", 3 in which C. Łubieńska gives a critical evaluation of the sources and works she has examined are perceptive, well-balanced, and extremely clear and honest. These pages alone would suffice to arouse the sincere esteem of scholars.

<sup>88</sup> Cf. supra, Ch.I, 3c. It is in the bibliographical introduction placed at the beginning of the work that C. Łubieńska states: "Tekst najstarszy rękopiśmienny, włączony do Ksiag Towarzystwa, które dzięki promocy ks. prof. Don Paolo Guerrini mogliśmy odszukać, znajduje się w Archivio di Stato w Brescji". Cf. Łubieńska, Św. Aniela, op. cit., p.XVII.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. supra, Ch.I, 3.a.

 <sup>90</sup> Cf. supra, Ch.I, 3.b.
 91 Cf. supra, Ch.I, 3.b.

<sup>92</sup> GUERRINI, S. Angela, op. cit., p. XV.

<sup>93 &</sup>quot;Evaluation of sources and works".

Her thirty-two pages of bibliography, systematically arranged, also provide an excellent starting-point for a restoration of the Merician bib-

liography.94

Mother Łubieńska's work, written almost on the eve of World War II, remained virtually unknown outside the borders of Poland, and the early post-war years were not a propitious time to tackle its translation and publication. Thus, even the projected translation into Italian did not take place, while the untimely death of Mother Łubieńska prevented her from completing the draft of the second volume.

## c) Paolo Guerrini (1880-1960)

For the 4th Centenary of the foundation of the Company of St Ursula, a collection of works appeared in Brescia in 1936, with the twofold aim of celebrating the occasion and of making a contribution to the local historiography:

– S. Angela Merici e la Compagnia di S. Orsola nel IV Centenario della fondazione (1535-1935). Miscellanea di Studi di S. Undset – G. Gaggia – P. Guerrini – L. Dentella. Editrice Àncora, Brescia, 1936. This was Volume 12 of the "Monografie di Storia Bresciana", Series 7 of the "Memorie Storiche della Diocesi di Brescia". Its 533 pages were the result of recent discoveries and re-discoveries. Taken as a whole, they are the first to embrace in one large sweep the period and the background, the Foundress, the foundation and its expansion, together with its revival after the Napoleonic suppression and its worldwide expansion during the 20th century.

Paolo Guerrini, former librarian at the Queriniana, an indefatigable collector and editor of documents relating to Brescia, had assembled together there some of his essays, and others from various sources and

with a different approach.

His contribution,<sup>95</sup> entitled La Compagnia di S. Orsola dalle origini alla soppressione napoleonica (1535-1810), has 12 chapters and consists of 195 pages. It offers, among other things, the presentation of some archive source-material relating to the history of the Company, the result of certain research regarding the family and relatives of Angela Merici, the setting in which the Company of St Ursula was born, and the Merician

Guerrini, La Compagnia di S. Orsola dalle origini alla soppressione napoleonica (1535-1810) in S. An-

gela, op. cit., pp.53-247.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>94</sup> Together with the contribution of the Bibliography of BERNARDA ROSS (cf. supra, at the beginning of this chapter), which covers all types of Merician literature (historical, hagiographical, spiritual, pedagogical, etc.).

Writings. This essay was meant to be the forerunner of a book which would have been completely devoted to the Saint (in the "Memorie Storiche" series) on the occasion of the 4th Centenary of her death in 1940, but World War II put an end to this project.

We will have to come back to Guerrini later, and not always in support of his statements, especially when in his over-hastiness – due to the amount of work he was publishing – he tends to indulge his own facility for writing, and this he could have avoided with a little more accurate reflection.

However, far be it from our intention to belittle this editor who has rendered great service to Merician historiography. His monumental collection, recently reprinted, is invaluable for the documents which are published there, many for the first time, and for the information it offers, even if it would be prudent and useful to check each time with the originals.

## d) Antonio Cistellini (1905-)

Antonio Cistellini is the author of two works, which are not equal in importance but are of equal interest, as they both portray the figure of Angela Merici:

- Antonio Cistellini Prete dell'Oratorio, Figure della Riforma Pretridentina. Stefana Quinzani. Angela Merici. Laura Mignani. Bartolomeo Stella. Francesco Cabrini. Francesco Santabona. Prefazione di Mons. Paolo Guerrini. Morcelliana, 1948. Anastatic reprint with appendices, 1979.96
- Antonio Cistellini, La vita religiosa nei secoli XV e XVI, in Storia di Brescia promossa e diretta da Giovanni Treccani degli Alfieri, per interessamento della Banca S. Paolo di Brescia, Morcelliana Editrice, 1962. II. "La dominazione veneta (1426-1575)", 1963.<sup>97</sup>

In the first of these two works, Cistellini, ignoring any critical or historical problem and writing with ease, portrays a person who is alive and attractive, but this figure is indistinguishable from the traditional stereotypes into which the best-known and widespread Merician documents have moulded her.

The second work condenses the life and activity of Angela Merici into less than two pages, where the author has allowed several inaccuracies to slip in, for example, the "Compagnia delle Dimesse di S. Orsola" (it was called "Compagnia di Sant'Orsola"; and what is more, the word

For the study on Angela Merici, cf. pp.47-55.
 For the profile of Angela Merici, cf. pp.456-457.

"dimesse" did not come into use until later); "con voti religiosi" (the "virgins" of St Ursula did not take religious vows; they had a secular

structure); and some dates are wrong.

On the other hand, the research which Cistellini carried out on the "Divino Amore" – the results of which can be seen in the first work mentioned <sup>98</sup> –, as well as the publication of some of the documents relating to this movement and to certain figures of the pre-Tridentine reform, can all make a valuable contribution to historiography.

## e) Teresa Ledóchowska (1904-)

Niece of Cecylja Łubieńska and her companion during her voyages of exploration into Italian archives and libraries, Sister Teresa Ledóchowska devoted herself, from 1963 onwards, to some historical research, the result of which was a two-volume work:

- Angèle Merici et la Compagnie de Ste-Ursule à la lumière des documents. I. Une éducatrice et une apôtre de la Réforme Pré-Tridentine. II. L'évolution de la Compagnie primitive. Roma-Milano, Àncora 1968. The work is in French.

The two volumes, which consist of XLVII + 335 and 427 pages respectively, are accompanied by some interesting documentary appendices. Vol.I reproduces the Writings of St Angela (the Regola in Turlino's edition, and the Ricordi and the Testamento from the APC. Vat.); the Processo Nazari from the APC. Vat.; Tribesco's testimony, taken from the publication of Bertolotti; <sup>99</sup> Pandolfo Nassino's evidence as given in the APC. Vat.; the Act of election of Angela Merici taken from the Secondo Libro Generale; the "Brief" for the burial (which is, in fact, a Letter of the Apostolic Penitentiary) taken from the Vita of Lombardi. In Vol.II, the most important documents are the "triptych" of Cozzano: <sup>100</sup> the Risposta as given in the manuscript D.VII.8 in the BQ, the Epistola from Guerrini's edition, the Dichiarazione from the APC. Vat.; and in addition, the Bolla of Paolo III from the Register of the ASV, and the Extract of the letter of Landini from Guerrini's publication. <sup>101</sup>

A rich harvest of Merician documents had finally appeared, including the "triptych" of Cozzano, hitherto virtually unknown. The whole

work was immediately translated into English:

- Angela Merici and the Company of St. Ursula according to the historical

<sup>98</sup> CISTELLINI, Figure, op. cit., passim.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>99</sup> Cf. supra, Ch.I, 2.b. <sup>100</sup> Cf. supra, Ch.I, 3.b.

<sup>101</sup> Cf. supra, Ch.II, 3.c.

documents. I. An educator and apostle of the pre-Tridentine reform II. The evolution of the primitive Company. Rome-Milan, Ancora. From the French edition of 1968.

This was followed by a complete translation into Portuguese, and

partial translations of it into Japanese and Italian.

The work immediately had a very wide circulation. 102 The style, the documentation it offered and the novelty of some of the interpretations, all made it attractive. The new interpretations, in particular, seemed to strike a chord with the heartfelt social expectations of that period. Conclusions were drawn from them which had certainly not been envisaged by the author, and which would have repercussions on later religious historiography. The most valuable part of T. Ledóchowska's work was left in the shadow, while special attention was given to the hypothetical view of a certain sociological direction in the life and work of Angela Merici. Such a view appears, for example, in the Italian edition of Léon Cristiani, Volume XVII of the *Histoire de l'Eglise* edited by Fliche and Martin, or in a more restrained manner in the *Storia della Chiesa in Italia* by Gregorio Penco. 103

Although it has no critical value whatsoever, we cannot pass over a new elaboration of T. Ledóchowska's study in Italian, dealing just with the first volume, by Maria Teresa Castelli: T. Ledóchowska – M.T. Castelli, Sant' Angela Merici, Mericianum, Desenzano del Garda, 1981.

Nearly always making a summary of the original, M.T. Castelli borrows statements and conclusions from it without weighing them, and then adds to them her own inaccuracies. Thus, we read, for example, the description <sup>104</sup> she gives of the *Secondo Libro Generale*: <sup>105</sup> "... a Stateregister, which gathers together, from 1544 to 1632, all the bureaucratic information of the new association. This big protocol (which is in the State Archives in Brescia) contains, among other precious things, the Rule and the attested act of election of 1537. The Secondo Libro Gene-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>102</sup> The hypotheses and conclusions expressed in this work were later synthesised in the articles "Angela Merici", "Conservatori", "Orsoline" in the *Dizionario degli Istituti di Perfezione*, edited by GUERRINO PELLICCIA (1962-1968) and GIANCARLO ROCCA (1969-). Ed. Paoline, Roma, in vols.I,II,VI respectively. These articles bear T. Ledóchowska's name.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>103</sup> Storia della Chiesa. XVII. LEONE CRISTIANI, La Chiesa al tempo del Concilio di Trento. Edizione italiana di ALESSANDRO GALUZZI, OM. Editrice S.A.I.E. Torino 1977, pp.42-44. Here it is claimed that the Company of St Ursula has as its "principal aim the moral and religious education of women, the spiritual and material help of young abandoned girls, of the sick and of prostitutes" (p.43). GREGORIO PENCO, Storia della Chiesa in Italia, Vol.I, Dalle origini al Concilio di Trento, Milano, Jaca Book, 1978, pp.657-658.

<sup>104</sup> LEDÓCHOWSKA-CASTELLI, Sant' Angela, op. cit., p.52, note 2.

<sup>105</sup> For the Secondo Libro Generale, cf. supra, Ch.I 3.c.

rale is also called Libro bollato or sigillato". 106

In addition to the vast amount of documentation contained in the Appendices, T. Ledóchowska gives further information by means of footnotes which appear throughout the two volumes. Perhaps some translation and interpretation errors in these are due to the fact that, in spite of the author's acquired knowledge of the Italian language, certain nuances and particularities of the local speech of the 15th and 16th centuries could easily have escaped her.

Through our own research, and thanks to the documentation we have discovered during these last years, we have arrived at conclusions sometimes different from those put forward by Teresa Ledóchowska in 1968, especially with regard to certain documents and events. We will try and indicate the path we have taken, pointing out the different stages of our journey.

<sup>106 &</sup>quot;... un registro statale che accoglie dal 1544 al 1632 tutte le notizie burocratiche della nuova associazione. Parti preziose di questo grosso protocollo (che si trova all'Archivio di Stato in Brescia) sono tra l'altro la Regola e l'atto notarile della elezione, del 1537. Il Sec. Libro Generale è anche detto Libro bollato o sigillato". For the *Libro Bollato* or *Sigillato*, cf. infra, Pt.III, Ch.I, Appendix Note.

# Part II ANGELA MERICI

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# Chapter I THE YEARS AT DESENZANO

The eye-witnesses and Angela's first biographers do not seem to have been very interested in her childhood and adolescence, or in the members of her family. They were satisfied, in fact, with just repeating some of the details which Angela herself had recounted, such as her father reading to the family, her early penitential practices, the premature death of her sister, and that is about all.

The figure of Angela became fixed half-way, as it were, between the stereotypes applicable to a large number of privileged souls and a certain reverential abstractionism.

The documents which we discovered, especially at the Archivio Antico Comunale at Desenzano, as well as the one at Salò, yielded us an unexpected harvest of information. They are not easy to read (we have in mind the writing and language of those "rasse" about which we have already spoken in Pt.I, Ch.I), and inevitably there are gaps due to the dispersal of papers. This is probably why researchers in the past had difficulty in recovering these documents or in interpreting them.

The recovery of these documents enabled us not only to make some rectifications and to complement what we already knew about the maternal branch of the family, but also to identify certain members of the Merici family, to see them living in their concrete setting and to share, as it were, in their daily life. The fields round the Grezze form the background, in particular the "Machet", which was the scene not only of rural misadventures, but especially of one of the most intense spiritual experiences of young Angela.

#### 1. THE LAND OF BIRTH

Desenzano, on the south-west bank of Lake Garda or Benaco, is situated in the region which used to be called "Venetian Lombardy", because geographically it belonged to Lombardy and politically it was under the Serenissima. In the 15th and 16th centuries it was a small town

clustered round its castle perched on the top of a hill high enough to dominate the surrounding countryside. The shore was flanked by the houses of fishermen and grain-merchants, who were able to take advantage of the immediate access to the lake to evade in some measure the control of those collecting the town dues. Further inland, the gently undulating countryside was covered with pastures, fields and orchards.

Bernardino Faino, and precisely in his "Note varie per la biografia di S. Angela Merici",1 which he wrote nearly two centuries after the period Angela spent at Desenzano, presents the countryside as follows: "Disenzano is a place to be counted as one of the most important of the Brescian Riviera, a part of the country so favoured by nature that it does not envy the excellence of the most fortunate coastal regions ... It is the commercial centre of all this Riviera region, which in the Brescian area consists of only 37 communes, that is the chief territorial units which, in their turn, are responsible for 140 well-populated villages, almost like colonies. I have called it the commercial centre because it is at Disenzano, which is on the route to Venice, at a distance of 98 miles from this principal city" (and here Faino indicates the corresponding mileage for "all the other surrounding towns" of Padua, Vicenza, Verona, Mantua, Trent, Brescia, Cremona, Crema, Bergamo, Lodi and Milan), "it is here that grainstocks are amassed; these come from the very fertile farmlands of Cremona, and even more of Mantua, and are then sent out to feed many of the most-populated valleys, in return for which Disenzano receives large quantities of merchandise and metals". The "above-named Country is written Disenzano, but more popularly Desenzano, from the Latin word Decentianum". 1 bis

The actual lakeside did not produce rich harvests, but Desenzano was an important grain-market, perhaps the most flourishing, supplied as it was by the farmers of the very fertile lands of Cremona and Mantua, and given also its favourable position on the commercial route leading to the region of Trent. Lake Garda abounded in fish, trout, tench, eels, and "carpioni", a special kind of fish, much sought after for the tables of wealthy Brescians.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> FAINO, "Note varie" in Miscellanea, op. cit., BQ, ms.K.VI.1, f.146r-v.

<sup>1</sup>bis "Disenzano è terra annoverata fra le principalissime della Riviera di Brescia, paese tanto favorito dalla natura, che non invidia l'eccellenza delle più felice costiere... emporio di tutta la detta Riviera, la quale nella parte Bresciana comprende solamente communi n.37, cioè terre principali che, quali colonie, tengono a loro compartitamente soggette 140 ville tutte benissimo habitate. L'ho chiamata emporio, perché in questa, che è situata sul passo di Vinegia, città dominante da cui è distante miglia 98, ... si fa massa di grani, li quali usciti dalle feracissime campagne del Cremonese, et Mantovano in specie, passano a nodrire molte popolatissime valli; dalle quali riceve infinite merci e mettalli". La "Patria sodetta si scrive Disenzano, et più volgarmente Desenzano, dalli latini scritta Decentianum".

Further inland, on the other hand, there were numerous vineyards and olive-groves, but the principal wealth of this region came from making paper and linen. The yarn fabricated at Salò was especially appreciated.

In the time of Angela, the town of Desenzano was bustling with all the excitement of activities and exchanges, while further out in the country, rural activities were carried on, which made their own contribution,

albeit a modest one, to the local economy.

It is in a rural setting, surrounded by fields, that we will see Angela Merici's family living.

#### 2. THE MERICI FAMILY

Information about Angela Merici's family comes to us from different sources. For more than two centuries, it was provided by oral tradition; this tradition was then gathered together in the printed works, which for various reasons, sometimes allowed questionable conclusions to slip in.

But the procedures for the canonical processes for Angela's beatification and canonisation, and perhaps even more, the plan to publish a biography of a historical nature, made it necessary to go on searching at a deeper level through the careful analysis of public and private docu-

ments.

By the time the second half of the 18th century had been reached, it was not an easy task, without the aid of adequate records of births, marriages and deaths, to discover when the Mericis had moved to Desenzano, presumably somewhere between 1450 and 1470. Nor was it easy to reconstruct the history of Angela's reputation for sanctity, upon which the process had to be based. These various inquiries took place chiefly at Desenzano, and at Verona, the seat of the diocese to which Desenzano belonged. In charge of the inquiries was a Capuchin, Father Francesco Andreis, who like Angela, was a native of Desenzano.

For two years already he had been kept busy working for the process of beatification, in tasks not clearly defined, when on 18 August 1757, his father minister general, Fra Serafino, wrote from Rome conferring on him "the full merit of holy obedience to continue with the task", and authorising him also to move to Verona and elsewhere, according to the requirements of the Cause which had just begun.

On 2 November 1757, Signora Lelia Malvezzi, mother general and superior of the Company of St Ursula at Brescia, in her turn appointed him special Procurator of the Process which had been set up by the

bishop of Verona, in Verona as well as in Desenzano. She gave him power of attorney countersigned by the notary Angelo Facconi. The friar's task was now clearly defined: to go through ancient documents in search of signs of the public veneration paid to Angela, and then to make suitable extracts from them.<sup>2</sup>

#### a) The Mericis

Father Francesco from Desenzano had not restricted his enquiries to the renown and cult enjoyed by Angela Merici, but had also tried to collect together every possible bit of information about the family. He was in touch with Father Girolamo Lombardi, the Jesuit who would later write the biography of the future Beata, and this contact gave rise to a fruitful correspondence.

Some letters in the General Archives of the Ursulines of the Roman Union,<sup>3</sup> and others in the Archives of the Patriarchal Seminary of Venice,<sup>4</sup> bear witness to the diligence with which the Capuchin pursued his search. However, the information they contain is disappointing today because the documentation attached to the letters, which Father Francesco had collected together, sent to Rome, and received back, as was the accepted practice, has gone astray. We draw special attention to the Memorie manoscritte intorno alle due Famiglie Biancosi e Merici, tratte da documenti originali ed autentici, which Lombardi says he was able to consult, adding that he had found some very useful information in it.<sup>5</sup>

Father Francesco had met with some considerable difficulties from the Mericis who were then living at Darfo, in Valcamonica, and who claimed family ties with Angela Merici through one of their ancestors with the name Merico. The Capuchin wrote: "They profess to be directly descended from Giovanni Merico, father of Blessed Angela ... through a Merico Merici, son of the same Giovanni; they have burnt all the papers which spoke about Desenzano". We can think of no satisfactory explanation as to why the Mericis at Darfo took such drastic steps to repudiate the documentation which linked them to Desenzano, while acknowledging that they were descended from that branch.

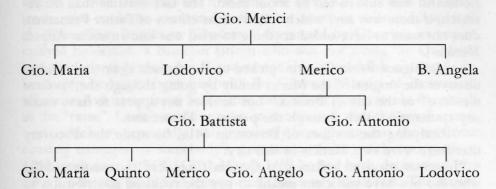
<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> APC. Vat. 340, ff.9v-10r.

AGUUR, Bd. Francesco da Desenzano.
 ASPV, Sala Monico, XXa. ms.786, 4.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> LOMBARDI, Vita, op. cit., p.2, n.(a).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Letter dated 6 September 1758. ASPV, Sala Monico XXa, ms.786, 4. "Pretendono la ditta discendenza da Giovanni Merico padre della Beata... per via d'un Merico Merici, figlio del medesimo Giovanni; hanno bruciato tutte le carte che parlavano di Desenzano". According to the genealogical tree of Darfo, there was, in fact, a Merico among the sons attributed to Giovanni Merici.

It was precisely during Father Francesco's enquiry in 1758 that they vindicated their descent, backing their claim by producing a family-tree, from which Lombardi <sup>7</sup> produced the following first part:



Father Francesco adds that these Mericis, in addition to basing their claim on the family-tree and on tradition, also boasted of having in their possession "two ancient pictures of Blessed Angela painted against a background of shining rays; one of these they keep in the house, the other is displayed in the parish church [of Darfo], beside the altar which they have had made themselves".8

Paolo Guerrini, in his turn, with regard to these Mericis at Darfo, gives two acts of sale drawn up by the notary Giorgio Celeri, dated the 6 and 26 April 1528. In the first one, an Antonio de Imerigho da Prandaglio figures as a witness, and in the second, an Antonio fu Giovanni de Imericis da Prandaglio. This would be the same person, who had settled at Darfo after leaving Prandaglio.<sup>9</sup>

Father Andreis came up against other difficulties, this time more understandable, on the part of the local administration of Desenzano. He refers to these himself in a letter dated 6 September 1758 to an unknown addressee. "I have put pressure on the gentlemen at Desenzano to search for some information; but ... they have not even been able to find the monuments [documents] anterior to 1600; with forthright insistence, I have had to search for them myself, and found them, thanks to a miracle of Blessed Angela, in the aforesaid books of the community ...". <sup>10</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> LOMBARDI, Vita, op. cit., p.7, n.(e).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Cf. supra, note 6. "due antiche pitture della Beata Angela dipinte coi raggi; una delle quali la conservano in casa, l'altra la tengono esposta in chiesa parrocchiale al lato di un altare da loro fatto fabbricare".

<sup>9</sup> GUERRINI, La Compagnia, in S. Angela, op. cit., p.87.

<sup>10</sup> Letter of 6 September 1758, cf. supra, n.6. "Ho pressati i signori di Desenzano acciò ricerchino

These documents were scattered during the incursions and wars which took place in the following centuries, and therefore we do not know what Father Francesco had discovered, apart from the little that Lombardi was able to tell us about them. The fact remains that the research, if there was any, which followed the efforts of Father Francesco, does not seem to have added anything to what was known about Angela Merici.

Monsignor Paolo Guerrini picked up the threads again and tried to discover the origins of the Merici family by going through the "polizze d'estimo" of the city of Brescia, 11 but he does not appear to have made any systematic search through the papers at Desenzano.

Analysing the tax-lists of Brescia in 1416, he made the discovery

that there were two Mericis in this city:

- "Imericus magister sellarius in Quadra Citadellae", a master-saddler who did not have sufficient means to pay the required contribution to the commune to maintain his rank as a noble ("inter nobiles qui dati fuerunt in mutis communium Brixiae die 1 Aprilis 1411 quia inventi fuerunt non satis dedisse");

- "Bertolinus Imerici in Nibolento", who likewise did not have his name inscribed on the rolls of nobility listed in the "Quadre" of the city ("inter nobiles in terris brixianis qui non sunt in Quadris descripti").<sup>12</sup>

In the declarations for the years 1430-1434, in addition to these two "Imerici", Guerrini found a third, a "Zaninus Aymerici in Bassano".<sup>13</sup>

According to Guerrini, this last-named could well have been Angela's great-grandfather. A communal decision of 21 February 1430 <sup>14</sup> had granted Brescian citizenship to this Zaninus (Giovannino) and to all his descendants.

The document is missing which might explain the possible relationship between this Zaninus and at least one of the two mentioned above, Imerico or Bertolino.

Our own research has its place at this point, although it is far from exhausting the subject.

To track down some possible information about civil status, we had to consult, in the Archivio Antico Comunale of Desenzano, certain registers containing the decisions of the city Council, land-registers when

qualche notizia; ma... neppure sono stati capaci di ritrovare i monumenti dentro il 1600; ma ho dovuto io, con franca importunità, ricercarli, e ritrovati per miracolo della Beata nei suddetti libri della comunità...".

<sup>11</sup> GUERRINI, La Compagnia, in S. Angela, op. cit., pp.79-88.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> ASC, C.II.434, ff.35 and 127, in GUERRINI, *ibid.*, p.80. <sup>13</sup> ASC, C.II.434 1/2, n.6 and 7, in GUERRINI, *ibid*.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> ASC, Libro delle Provvisioni, C.VI.485, f.35v, in GUERRINI, ibid, pp.80-81.

they exist, and the Libro I delle Rasse, which we have already introduced briefly.<sup>15</sup>

We embarked on our own search, starting from Libro D,16 which begins in 1468. Here for the first time we met a Carlo Merici da Nuvolento, who could be connected perhaps, in direct or collateral line, with the "Bertolinus Imerici in Nibolento" discovered by Guerrini: an impoverished nobleman, a Brescian citizen who was not living "in Quadris", but precisely at Nuvolento. We were not able to establish any family relationship he might have had with the Giovanni Merici of Desenzano, who also had come from Nuvolento, and whose name recurs frequently in the "rasse". Carlo's name appears in connection with the usual accusations which are repeatedly and generically brought against the residents: 'causing damages to somebody's pastures or fields, with two cattle in 1468, with four in 1480. On 3 March 1469 he had been denounced, this time for having taken and transported stones in a small cart. The accusation of 25 August 1468 named him as "Carolus Merizi de Nigolento"; in later charges no place of origin is given, which means that there is noone of the same name in the district.

The census of heads of families listed by "colonelli",<sup>17</sup> which was carried out between 21 November and the end of December 1484,<sup>18</sup> names him among the fully-qualified members of the Commune; this means that – having spent the prescribed number of years residing in the city <sup>19</sup> – he had been granted citizenship of it. In 1479 both Carlo Merici and a son are charged in one of the usual "rasse", but the son's name is not given. The loss of a number of the documents of this period prevented us from possibly identifying him later on.

At first the frequency of so many accusations against the residents is surprising and rather disconcerting. However, one needs to set them within the structural context of that time, whether official or private, and to consider some aspects of country life in that part of North Italy in order to judge the real significance of the "rasse".

On one side we have a kind of communal institution, namely that of the "campari", public officials acting as rural wardens of the peace, re-

<sup>15</sup> Cf. supra, Pt.I, Ch.I, 1.a.

<sup>16</sup> AACD, Reg.n.4.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> The "colonelli" was the name given to both the administrative units into which the population of Desenzano was divided, and also to those in charge of these divisions. And the word "colonelli" (or more commonly "colonelle") will take its place in Merician literature as the title of the area superiors in the primitive Company.

<sup>18</sup> AACD, Reg.n.8, Liber Provisionum H, ff.51v-52v.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> We were not able to find the "Statuti" of the Commune of Desenzano, so we cannot say precisely how long a period of residence was stipulated to obtain citizenship.

sponsible for seeing that boundaries and the rights of both common and

private property are respected.

On the other side, we have a division of property which did not facilitate such a respect. The hinterland round Desenzano did not cover extensive areas; landed properties tended to be split up, parcelled out as they were between land-owners, metayers and tenant-farmers. The fact, too, that boundary-lines between the properties were seldom clearly defined, made trespassing easy; people did it unknowingly and inadvertently, especially those who did not know what the local custom was (as could be the case with new people moving into the region or children). It usually ended up with some infringement of the law, which certainly would not escape the "campari".

Sometimes the "right of passage" was allowed along narrow paths, barely distinguishable, which separated one property from another, or even within the property itself. Countryfolk, accustomed to taking advantage of anything that came their way, used to pick up or gather everything they found by the roadside or on the track: medicinal and edible herbs, dry branches, chestnuts or other fruit which had fallen on the path. If by ill luck they fell into the hands of the vigilant "campari" or the owners of the land being crossed, it was difficult for them to prove afterwards where these things had come from. "Campari" and landowners used to bring in charges of theft or at least of damages: "dampnificavit...". Sometimes the accused succeeded in proving that the charge was groundless, and then the charge would be lifted and the threat of a fine removed, but even so, the accusation remained written in the records.

Then there was another kind of charge which came under the heading of "dampnificavit", the trespassing of cattle being led to pasture. Given their relatively modest size, the individual properties offered a rather restricted area for pasturage and for passage. Goats especially used to escape easily from custody, stripping the branches of leaves, nibbling away at the hedges and crops. Taking advantage of the herdsman having a nap or weaving baskets or panniers, cattle also used to wander easily over the boundaries, escaping from the pasture assigned to them. The "rassa", communicated officially, fell on the head of the family, reminding him of his duty and imposing a fine on him.

Whether they were true or false, the "rasse", prompted by a scrupulous sense of duty or by some less noble sentiment, used to rain down pitilessly on those accused. Their official recording, however, enables us to extract, even if only very approximately, some information about the family of Giovanni Merici, up to 1492. In that year there is a break in the

series of Libri delle Rasse, as we have already said. And it is about this period that the Merici family broke up.

### b) Relatives at Salò

All Angela Merici's biographers are in agreement that the family on her mother's side were from Salò and that their surname was Biancosi. Doctor Jacopo Alberti of Salò, in the "Memorie" which he collected together at the time of the processes of beatification and canonisation, states that Angela's mother was called "Biancosa Biancosi". Lombardi passed on this detail, perhaps simply because he was a conscientious collector, but it did not have much support.

We went through the registers of the Archivio Antico del Comune of Salò in search of traces of this Biancosi family, with only one reliable piece of information at our disposal: Antonio Romano had given "Barto-

lomeo Biancosi" as the name of Angela's first cousin.

Father Francesco Andreis of Desenzano affirms, in a letter of 4 August 1758,<sup>21</sup> that the Biancosi family was related to the noble Bertazzolis and Tracagnis (there are variations of this name: Tracchagni, Tracagno,

Treccani) of Salò, but he does not indicate in which epoch.

During our search through some of the Libri Ordinamentorum of Salò, in other words the registers of decisions taken in the 15th century, and also in some of the declarations of goods at that time, we came across some Bertazzolis (Tomaso, Tomasino, Bertazzolo) and some Tracagnos (Bernardino, for example), but no Biancosis. It is true that there are big gaps, sometimes of several decades, between the dates of the various Registri dell' Estimo (which are numbered in unbroken consecutive order in the list in the Archivio del Comune), and that during these years family units could have been formed or dissolved in various ways. Nevertheless, this complete absence of the Biancosis puzzled us.

Finally we discovered, in the Land-Register of 1524,<sup>22</sup> the declaration of goods of a certain "ser Bartholomeus et frater, quondam ser Blanchosii de Blanchis", in other words, a Bartolomeo and one of his brothers, sons of the late ser Biancoso de Bianchi. They owned various landed property, including one in the district of San Bernardino, which was adjacent to that belonging to a certain "Alovisius de Morosis", and their own house of habitation, situated in the district of the "piazzetta di San Giovanni".

<sup>20</sup> LOMBARDI, Vita, op. cit., p.1, note (c).

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ASPV, Sala Monico XXa, ms.786, 4.
 AACS, Extimus MDXXIIII, f.66r.

Among the declarations in the Land-Register Catastico del Estimo Generale del anno 1578, we find the name of a Bartolomeo Biancosi who had died leaving an inheritance as yet undivided, to be shared by the "Heredi di Bartolomeo Bianchos". Among the property declared by the heirs there was a house in stonework, with a tiled roof, in the San Bernardino district, and adjoining the property belonging to the heirs of "Aloviso Moroso": it is the same place, with the same boundary as one of the properties declared by ser Bartolomeo fu Biancoso de Bianchi in 1524. One can conclude from this that Bartolomeo fu Biancoso de Bianchi and Bartolomeo Biancosi, Angela's cousin, are one and the same person, who has now finally adopted the surname "Biancoso" (or "Biancosi"). And this is the name which biographers will ascribe a posteriori to the maternal side of Angela's family.

In the same *Catastico* of 1578 there is yet another Biancoso, ser Girardo, who declares his property: <sup>24</sup> would he be related perhaps? This suggests a line of enquiry to follow through and a hypothesis to be verified.

Bartolomeo's father – Angela's uncle – must therefore have been called Biancoso de Bianchi, and had the title "ser" (probably a notary). He was also a member of the Town-Council of Salò, as one can gather from the register of the deliberations and decisions covering the years 1500-1516.<sup>25</sup> Going through the long lists of town-councillors, we noticed that only a very few names are prefixed by the title "ser". Biancoso always features there as "ser Blanchosus de Blanchis".

And since the Christian name of his sister (who we think is the Caterina, wife of Giovanni, mentioned in the "rasse" of Desenzano) was one of the most widespread at that time, it would have been the usual village custom to find another surname for her, to distinguish her from any of her namesakes. Thus, Caterina Bianchi, sister of "ser Biancoso", in all probability became "Caterina la Biancosa". This would support in some way what Jacopo Alberti had stated, that Angela's mother was called Biancosa.

As for the collateral kinship with the Bertazzolis and the Tracagnis, which Lombardi believes must be dated after Angela Merici's time, <sup>26</sup> we did not follow through any line of enquiry, as the question lay outside our field of interest. However, among the Bertazzolis we will meet Ste-

24 Ibid, f.33r.

<sup>26</sup> LOMBARDI, Vita, op. cit., pp.1-3 and 59-60.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. AACS, Catastico del Estimo Generale, ff.5v and 36r.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> AACS, Liber Ordinamentorum n.8, passim. We did not take our search any further.

fano, the elegant young man who changed his way of life after a conversation with Angela and became a priest. According to his "polizza d'estimo", which we found in the Archivio Storico Civico di Brescia,<sup>27</sup> he would have been 64 years old in 1568. His meeting with Angela must have taken place, therefore, in 1520 at the earliest. Cistellini, speaking of him, presents him as an indecisive person, incapable of generous resolutions, but nevertheless in contact with some eminent spiritual men.<sup>28</sup>

We will also meet Doctor Tracagno, Angela's nephew according to some authors, who came to visit his ageing relative. Even before he knocked at the door, Angela had known who it was and had given an order for the door to be opened to welcome him. Bellintani, Gondi and Doneda <sup>29</sup> all recount this episode, and it will be cited frequently during the processes as evidence of the gift of prophecy which God had bestowed on Angela.

Rather than allow ourselves to be caught up in a discussion on the family ties between Doctor Tracagno and the Mericis, let us just point out that, in that region, the cousins of parents are often called "uncle" or "aunt" out of respect, especially when there is a notable difference of age. Doneda in his time had already noted this fact.<sup>30</sup> This could explain the title of "nephew" given to Tracagno, without making it necessary to suppose that a sister of Angela had married a Tracagno of Salò, as some authors have believed. He could have been just a young cousin.

# c) Giovanni Merici

In our section on the enquiries undertaken by Father Francesco of Desenzano, we anticipated when we said that the official acts and the registers of the public administration could well yield richer information than the oral and written testimonies presented to the Capuchin by the relatives of the Saint or by those devoted to her.

Thus our search in the Archivio Antico Comunale of Desenzano, in particular among the registers which deal more closely with everyday life in the country, enabled us to meet the Mericis.

First of all, in 1468, there is the "Carolus Merizi de Nigolento", whom we have already mentioned; <sup>31</sup> then, frequently after 1475, a "Johannes Merici", with his place of origin given only twice, "de Maner-

30 DONEDA, *Ibid.*, pp.28-29.

31 Cf. supra, 2.a.

PE, n.17. "Stefano Bertazzuoli de Rossi, prete in Salò".
 CISTELLINI, Figure, op. cit., p.106 and passim.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> BELLINTANI, *Vita, op. cit.*, BQ, ms.B.VI.30, f.[10]; GONDI, *Vita, op. cit.*, p.26; DONEDA, *Vita, op. cit.*, p.68 and p.144, n.44.

ba" 32 in 1484, and "de Nigolento" in 1486.33

The fact that, up to 1492, nothing else is generally added to Giovanni Merici's name, would seem to prove that he was the only one with this name in the region. We will meet him, in answer to summons, either directly or in connection with his children or wife. Would this be Angela's family? Knowing for certain that her father was called Giovanni, as this is written in the attested act of Angela's election in 1537,<sup>34</sup> we have

good grounds for believing so.

Our first meeting with Giovanni Merici thus goes back to 1475. He did not come from Desenzano, but had moved there, we do not know exactly in which year. Then, according to the "provvisione" or communal decision of 27 September 1475, he had been accepted by word of mouth among the members of this Commune. In the "Repertorio" of the decisions to accept strangers among the citizens of the Commune there is the entry: "Zuan Merico. Accettation in Comune di Zuan Merico, altre volte acetato a boccha per li elletti, conforme le provisioni 27 setembrio 1475. L[ibro] I, f.75".35

This entry is found written among other acceptances which took place between 1486 and 1489, and to be more precise, after a resolution of 22 January 1487. Thus, it must be presumed that the verbal acceptance of 1475 was only ratified in the period 1487-1489. We have further proof of this in the 1484 census which gives the list of the heads of families grouped together by "colonello". Carlo Merici, who had already become a full member of the Commune, is there; "Zuan de Merigo" is also there, but among the "strangers".

We searched in vain for the Libro delle Provisioni which should have contained the record of the council-meeting mentioned by the Repertorio, and which originally was classified under the letter 'I'. The book cannot be found, and this made it impossible to collect together any other information about what went on at this meeting of 27 September 1475.

It is not at all clear how Professor Carlo Brusa, an expert in the documents of Desenzano, was able to let Guerrini 36 know one day that Giovanni Merici had been officially accepted at the meeting of the General Council in 1475, and that in the Libro delle Vicinie there was a clear statement of his earlier verbal acceptance by the "eletti" (that is, by

<sup>32</sup> AACD, Reg.n.8, Liber Provisionum H, f.26r.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., f.230r.

<sup>35</sup> AACD, Libro I di tutte le Parti, Ordeni e Provisioni del Sp. Comune di Desenzano, dell'anno 1464 principiato, Reg.n.32, f.41 sinistro.

36 GUERRINI, La Compagnia, op. cit., p.82, note 6.

the deputies "ad civilitates"). Here again, verification is impossible because this book is also lost.

The "Vicinie" were a council of "estimated" heads of families, in other words, they were subject to taxation. Their General Council, consisting of forty members, elected a Special Council of twelve members each year, and these were the "eletti", who took it in turns to exercise the function of consul for a month. The Council of the "Vicinie" must have had some reasons for supporting the request for citizenship submitted by Giovanni Merici, but nothing is said about the date.

Although Giovanni had now become a citizen of Desenzano, this newly acquired status did not make him forget his former Brescian citizenship, handed down to him probably by an ancestor who had obtained it for himself and for his direct descendants, and which was still a title

of prestige.

In fact, the attested act of 1537 <sup>37</sup> states that Angela is the daughter of the late "Johannis de Mericis, olim civis et habitatoris Brixiae", thereby recognising her father's status as "a former citizen of Brescia". This still leaves unanswered the question of the privilege of actually having lived in Brescia. It would seem to imply a period of residence at Brescia, then a period at Nigolento (today Nuvolento), from where Carlo had also come, and finally, the move to Desenzano in some year before 1475, the date of his verbal acceptance. Citizenship, in fact, was only granted after a certain number of years of residence in the place. What reasons could have been behind these successive moves? Any conjecture put forward could well be proved false later, so we will refrain from formulating any.

Father Francesco of Desenzano has left us a little information, although rather vague, about the economic situation of the Merici family. According to what Lombardi says <sup>38</sup> the Capuchin had been able to consult the books of taxes and communal tax-collections for the years 1517, 1526, 1529, 1530 and 1556, which included the payments made by Angela and by other Merici kinsmen. From these entries he had deduced that "at that time the Merici family at Desenzano enjoyed quite a good income". Unfortunately, from time immemorial these communal tax-books have been lost, and they are no longer listed in the inventory of the local archives (Archivio Antico Comunale of Desenzano). This loss makes it impossible for us to have any idea what the Merici patrimony consisted of after Angela's return to Desenzano and after her departure

37 D6.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup> LOMBARDI, Vita, op. cit., p.3, note (a).

from there to settle in Brescia. A study of inheritance declarations would possibly bring to light the property owned by Giovanni Merici at the end of the 15th century.

We found, however, the Registro dell'Estimo of 1523,<sup>39</sup> a register which up to now has escaped the notice of researchers, and even of Father Francesco. On f.16v, there are two lines containing Angela's declaration. From this entry we learn that she was the owner, in her own name, of a property, the size of which is not mentioned (it never is in these declarations), but the location is given, together with the fact that the land is cultivated and is planted with vineyards. The tax that had to be paid was five "lire planete": "Sur Merizi habet petiam terrae aratoriae vidatae in contrata Caser a monte Zorzo Monte, a sero Petrus Domigo. Lire 5".<sup>40</sup>

But even if, for the time being, we have no information about the property which may have belonged to Giovanni Merici, at least the "rasse" give us some idea, however approximate, of the socio-economic situation of the family. We will examine some of these "rasse" in the next section of this chapter.

It is the "rasse" again which will give us some concrete details about the composition of Giovanni Merici's household.

Regarding the location of the Merici dwelling, so far we have not found any document of the period which provides reliable information. According to a long tradition, still alive in Desenzano, the Merici family lived in two different houses: one of these, at the foot of the castle, would have been where Angela was born; the other, at the Grezze, was where the children would have grown up. In support of this second house there are frequent references in the "rasse" to the fields of the "Machetto", a place not far from the Grezze, where the children would be caught out in some of their misdemeanours.

The house where Angela was born, therefore, would have been in the present Via del Castello, at no. 96 (formerly 333), and this tradition is supported by some evidence which turned up at the beginning of this century. In a note which he sent to Monsignor Guerrini, Professor Brusa

<sup>39</sup> AACD, Reg.n.56.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>40</sup> D 14. Pianet, pianetto, planette: Brescian coins which were flat (moneta piatta) in contrast to earlier coins which had been concave (scudellata). The "lira di planet" had double the value of the Venetian lira, and in 1518 and 1520 it was one and a half times the value of the Milanese denaro Cf. EDOARDO MARTINONI, *La moneta*, Vocabolario generale, Multigrafica editrice, Roma 1977. Only some years later a gold ducat or "zecchino", which was worth 6 lire and 4 soldi in Venice, was worth between 3.2 and 3.8 lire in Brescia. DONEDA, *Notizie della Zecca e delle monete di Brescia*, ediz. 2ª corredata di note ed accresciuta della Tavola delle Monete e di una nuova Cronaca da Guid'Antonio Zanetti, Bologna, nella Stamperia di Lelio della Volpe, 1786, p.62.

(already mentioned) states that Angela was born in a room on the first floor, the first on the left mounting the staircase. It was an inner room and opened out on to a balcony on the east. On one of the walls, in a niche, was an epigraph recalling the happy event that had taken place there. The veracity of this little memorial, according to Brusa, was corroborated by the statements of two daughters of Giovanni Polver, who used to live there. Their father remembered having seen this inscription when he was still a youth. Polver's two daughters had also heard the tradition confirmed by the lawyer, Giovanni Cantarini, who in his turn had heard his father speak about it.<sup>41</sup>

In 1930, Cecylja Łubieńska also had gathered the same information from Erminia Polver, who was then the local superior of the Company of St Ursula at Desenzano.<sup>42</sup>

On the buttress of the castle at Desenzano overlooking the Via Castello, opposite the house, a commemorative plaque was set up on 7 May 1961: "St Angela Merici – Foundress of the Company of St Ursula – died in Brescia the 27 January 1540 at the presumed age of 66 years – was born in the house opposite – in the room on the north-west of the first floor". 43 bis

There are no documents giving information about births and deaths, so biographers relied on a page in the chronicle of Pandolfo Nassino, who had said that she died at an age between 65 and 70 years, to establish Angela's year of birth.<sup>43</sup> Faino, at first uncertain, finally adopted 1474 as the year of Angela's birth, without giving any documentary evidence or reason for his choice.<sup>44</sup> It was almost by general tacit consent that the year 1474, as proposed by him, was accepted and introduced into Merician historiography.

Biographers are not in agreement over the number of children Giovanni Merici had, nor do they know where to place them time-wise. Romano had learnt from Angela herself that she had a sister (an older sister according to the biographers); from the "rasse" we learn that there were certainly two brothers, and possibly even three. This would give some support to the family-tree of the Mericis of Darfo, published by Lombardi and reproduced by us earlier.

This portion of the genealogical tree, however, seems to have been

GUERRINI, La Compagnia, op. cit., p.82, n.6.
 ŁUBIEŃSKA, Św. Aniela, op. cit., p.58, n.2.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>42bis</sup> "Sant'Angela Merici – Fondatrice della Compagnia di Sant'Orsola – morta in Brescia il 27 gennaio 1540 nella presunta età di anni 66 – nacque nella casa qui a fronte – nella stanza a nord-ovest del primo piano".

D7.
 FAINO, Vita, op. cit., p.9.

drawn from memory, with a certain ignorance of the norms of genealogy. The other daughter, in fact, does not feature, and yet there is no doubt about her existence. She is missing probably because she had died young. Having said this, the fact that Angela's name was written at the end could well be because she was a girl, as was usually done in the "polizze d'estimo", and not because she was the last-born.

# d) Everyday life

The few meagre autobiographical details related by Angela herself, have come down to us through the accounts of a few very close friends: Antonio Romano, Agostino Gallo, Don Giacomo Tribesco.

About her childhood, her family surroundings, her life at home, they tell us very little, practically nothing. However, we do learn from them that when Angela was young, she listened eagerly to what her father used to read aloud, and that she gradually allowed her whole life to be modelled and orientated by those readings.

What they were, no-one has said. Thanks to the spread of printing during the last part of the 15th century, it could have been the *Imitation of Christ* or the *Golden Legend*. Angela would tell Antonio Romano that when she was a litle girl of five, she used to listen to her father reading "spiritual books about Saints and Virgins", and that she had then begun to lead a spiritual life made up of contemplation and penance.<sup>45</sup>

In his Golden Legend, Jacopo da Voragine had devoted many pages to the feasts of Christ and of the Madonna, of the first martyrs, of the Fathers of the Church ... The adventures of Christ's heroes, recounted with a simple faith and easy to read, were edifying and interesting. On all the ferial days of Advent and Lent there was a good, solid meditation, and this made the book a kind of treatise of the spiritual life, from which it was easy to draw moral applications. It was probably the best-known book of that time and, with the Bible and the Imitation of Christ, it helped to nourish the faith and piety of generations of Christians. Printed in Venice for the first time in 1474 and translated into the vernacular, the Golden Legend had already gone through eleven successive editions in that city alone before the end of the century. But could it, within the space of so few years, have reached the hands of Giovanni Merici? Given the rapidity of the successive reprintings and the facility of exchanges with Venice, it is certainly possible.

It was probably in the evening that Giovanni Merici used to read

<sup>45</sup> Processo Nazari. D16.

the lives of Saints to the little family gathered round him. Evenings in the villages, especially in winter – right up to the first decades of this century – were usually spent by the fireside or in the stable, where there was a little heat from the animals and light from an oil-lamp suspended from a rafter. While the women would shuttle their spindle to and fro in their never-ending spinning or do their mending, the men used to repair their farming-tools or busy themselves with other jobs in preparation for the sowing or the harvest – all this against a background of quiet domestic chatter. What a blessing it was if someone knew how to read and fill the long evening hours with tales of martyrs and saints, while the children were carried away into a dream-world, surrounded by angels' wings, palms, crowns and splendours.

According to Faino, Giovanni Merici had an educational purpose in mind: "Giovanni ... knowing that the Lord attracts many to a holy life and to founding famous Religions through the reading of Saints' lives, as for example, a St Augustine reading the life of St Anthony Abbot, Bl. Giovanni Colombino the life of St Mary the Egyptian, St Ignatius Loyola and others, used to read the lives of Saints in the presence of his family ...". Mention here of St Ignatius is certainly out of place, because Giovanni could not have known about Ignatius of Loyola, who was born only in 1491. However, Faino makes him appear in his writing here so as to give additional force to his argument about the efficacy of good readings. Gondi introduces the same idea, but with more circumspection: "We know that the Lord has attracted many founders and fathers of famous Religions through the reading of the lives of Saints, such as St Augustine reading the life of St Antony ...". 47

Expressed in these terms, Gondi's remark is incontrovertible, whereas Faino allowed himself to be carried away by the idea which had occurred to him. At any rate, the evidence of Antonio Romano and Agostino Gallo is more than enough to establish a close link between the readings Angela heard from her father and the urge she felt to "devote herself to a sober, spiritual and contemplative life".<sup>48</sup>

Such was the atmosphere of the evenings, but during the day both adults and children were caught up and involved in all the demands and

<sup>47</sup> GONDI, Vita, op. cit., p.17: "sappiamo che molti institutori e padri di famose Religioni il Signore ha tirati con la lettione della vita de Santi, come sant'Agostino leggendo la vita di sant' Antonio...".

48 Processo Nazari, D16.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>46</sup> FAINO, *Vita, op. cit.*, pp.10-11: "Giovanni... sapendo ch'il Signore ha tirato molti alla vita della santità, ed a fondare famose Religioni con la lettura delle vite de Santi, come un sant'Agostino leggendo la vita di sant'Antonio abbate, il beato Giovanni Colombino la vita di santa Maria Egittiaca, sant'Ignatio Loiola, e altri, leggeva alla presenza della sua famiglia le vite de Santi...".

difficulties of real life. It was often a hard existence, in which work replaced play for children; but then sometimes play would get the upper hand, with all the inherent risk of overstepping the boundaries laid down by duty, laws and prescriptions. This can be seen from the warnings and the penalties written down in the recorded "rasse". In fact, it is these documents which we discovered that prompt us to return once more to the subject of the economic situation of the Mericis.

Let us recall, first of all, some of the opinions which have become codified, as it were: "Angela ... a little peasant-girl by birth" according to Landini; <sup>49</sup> Gondi says that her father was "a person of mediocre circumstances in that place", <sup>50</sup> Faino that "he came from ordinary stock"; <sup>51</sup> while Doneda says that Angela's parents were "very ordinary people of humble means". <sup>52</sup>

But neither Bellintani, who really belonged to Salò because his family had moved there when he was young, nor Nazari, who had listened to the eye-witnesses, has given any grounds for believing that it was a question of a state of poverty. As already stated by Lombardi, after he had seen the documentation collected by Father Francesco of Desenzano, it was probably more a question of "modest" means, or "mediocre" in the etymological meaning of the word – "in the middle" –, and not with the modern, rather pejorative meaning of "slight", "insufficient".

With this point in mind, let us now see what information can be gathered from the "rasse". It is in 1477 that we meet the Merici couple for the first time. On 29 May, on his own land in the Machet, Giovanni is caught with a goat, thereby incurring a charge; however, the following day the "camparo" gives no detail as to the offence Giovanni was accused of, and furthermore, there is no indication of any fine: "Johannes Merici bestia 1 caprina in prato suo al Machet die 29 per suprascriptum camparium. Et datum 30".<sup>53</sup>

On 13 July, his wife Caterina is accused by the "camparo" Mamolo of gathering "pizolos" <sup>54</sup> from the field of Andrea de Andreis, and on 12 August, of picking up some brushwood in the wood near the canal. <sup>55</sup> The name of the person who brought the charge for this second infringement is not given. On 19 August 1478, Giovanni Merici finds himself

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>49</sup> D15.

<sup>50</sup> GONDI, Vita, op. cit., p.13: "persona in quel luogo di mediocre condizione".

<sup>51</sup> FAINO, Vita, op. cit., p.8: "uomo di popolar conditione".

<sup>52</sup> DONEDA, Vita, op. cit., p.28: "genitori di mediocre condizione e di scarse facoltà".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>53</sup> AACD, Liber Provisionum E, reg.n.5, f.87v. Up to 1488 the "rasse" are found with the "provisioni". The "Machet" is not far from the Grezze.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>54</sup> Ibid., f.106v. We were not able to discover the meaning of the word "pizolos".

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., f.120r.

involved in some kind of damage, the details of which are not given; however, "solvit denarios de proprio", 56 in other words, he pays out of his own pocket, perhaps even on behalf of others. But these "rasse" are so vague that they seem to be inconsistent. We have already mentioned how natural it was for the peasant to collect edible herbs or to gather together bits of wood from the wayside, and how difficult it was for him to exculpate himself if he was accused, by saying exactly where they had come from.

Two "rasse" in 1479 are surprising, at least as much as the first one in 1477. On 22 August 1479 "Johannes Merici cum una bestia caprina comedenda uvas ex vitis suis ai Lavagni a monte Bertinum de Gatio". The accusation is dated 24 August.<sup>57</sup> And on 16 August a son (this is the first time we have met him) had been denounced for having picked grapes from his own vineyard two days earlier and for carrying them away.<sup>58</sup> The fact that the father and the son were charged with having eaten or carried away in a basket their own grapes would seem to suggest the existence of special regulations, either to control production or to levy custom taxes on the production itself, but no doubt it was easy to get round the regulations. These charges, for example, were not followed up by any fine.

However, Giovanni is rightly charged when six of his piglets caused damage to a field where some vetch (cicerchia) was growing. It is one of those numerous boundary mishaps, but the damage could not have been very serious as the fine is only one soldo: "Johannes Merici cum bestiis 6 porzinis dampnificavit in ciserciam heredis quondam Dominici Gedoni in contrata de Machet die 5 suprascripti [June 1479]; acusatus per Martinum Testorem". The Latin is very poor, both with regard to the vocabulary and the syntax; but the "campari" make every effort to give precise information regarding the places where the damages occurred, giving the name of the place or the name of the neighbouring owner, "a sero", "a mane", "a monte", etc.

As was mentioned earlier, then, a son appeared for the first time in the "rasse" of 16 August 1479. He had gone to pick some grapes in the

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., f.218v.

<sup>57</sup> AACD, Liber Provisionum F, reg.n.6, f.124v.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., f.119v.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>59</sup> AACD, Liber Provisionum E, reg.n.5, f.294r. Regarding "cicerchia" Agostino Gallo will write: "good cooked in soup, and better than rye for mixing with millet in bread-making". AGOSTINO GALLO, Le vinti giornate dell'agricoltura et de piaceri della villa. Nuovamente ristampate. Con le figure de gli instromenti pertinenti. Et con due tavole, una della dichiaratione di molti vocaboli e l'altra delle cose notabili, in Venetia, appresso Camillo Borgominerio, 1584, in 8°, pp.420, tav.10; BQ, 10.O.IX.9, p.50.

family vineyard at the Lavagni, and was carrying them home in a basket: "portavit alio uvas ex vitiis suis ai Lavagni a monte Johannes Antonius 14 suprascripti [August] cum cavagno". The boy must have been at least seven to nine years old to have been allowed to go off alone to pick

grapes for the family.

Up to nearly the end of 1482, we do not find any more "rasse" brought against Giovanni Merici. But among the accusations of 1 November mention is made for the first time of a daughter, who has taken some "frusconi", while her brother has cut some twigs and other wood. They had also apparently collected some olives at the foot of olive-trees. One of the properties where these "thefts" took place was at the Machet, "a sero Marolinus", and the other, "aput paludem a mane et a monte Johanna uxor Guidotti": "Filia Johannis Merici per dictum camparium dampnificavit accipiens fruschonos de rasolis Tinelli a Machet 14 suprascripti, a sero Marolinus. Item dampnificavit filius eius incidendo lignas videlicet zeradallos et alia ligna de quadam teste Anzolini a Machet aput paludem a mane et a monte Joanna uxor Guidotti legantes olivas ex pedibus olivarum...".60

The vocabulary of those times does not always have an equivalent among words in use today, but the "frusconi" is taken to mean the twigs and branches of a tree. It is more difficult to identify the "zeradallos", but it is still something connected with wood, either boughs or twigs collected for firewood, or even branches to be used as stakes in the garden to prop up the vegetables and other plants. One can assume that the two children had already reached adolescent age if they were carrying out this kind of work.

The zones mentioned in the various "rasse" are generally the "Machet", to the south of the Grezze, which has kept this name; the "Lavagni", the chestnut wood, the marshland, the common wood, none of which is easy to identify today.

It was in the interest of the "campari" to give as much credibility as possible to the summons, spelling out in detail those responsible for the misdeeds: filius, filia, duo filii et una filia, duo filii masculus et foemina, etc. These distinctions help us to build up a fairly accurate picture of how the Merici family was composed.

In 1484, it would seem that a second son entered the game of the "rasse", as on 18 October there is an accusation which very clearly denounces the "elder son" for having collected and carried home the dung from the mules belonging to Giovanni Maioli of the Machet: "Johannes

<sup>60</sup> AACD, Liber Provisionum G, reg.n.7, f.103r.

Merici quod filius suus maior dampnificabat accipiendo nititias [manure] de mulorum ex domo Johannis Maioli in contrata de Machet et alio asportavit et portavit domum eius die 17 suprascripti [October]. Acusatur

per Mafeum camparium".61

If it was necessary to distinguish the "elder son", this means that a second son was beginning to be known in the area. And it was perhaps this little boy who, on 5 August 1484, together with his sister, was accused of picking some grapes from the vegetable-garden of Tomasino da Lodi; she had hidden them in her lap (probably in her apron), and he had hidden his under his shirt: "Filia Johannis Merici legens in gremio uvas Tomasini de Laude al horto ... Filius suprascripti Johannis ut supra in sinu acceptans uvas". La was probably only a bit of childish mischief, but the prank would cost two fines of 4 soldi each – no little sum in those days!

Two months earlier, on 31 May, one of the two sons and the daughter had been accused of having pulled up the rye in the field of another owner: "Duo filii Johannis Merici, masculus et femina, cum dampnificaverunt extirpantes et frangentes siliginam Arici Maioli". 'There was another fine of 4 soldi to pay. The "campari" were carrying out their duty.

In the same year 1484, Caterina was accused on 6 August,<sup>64</sup> and Giovanni five days later,<sup>65</sup> both for having picked some figs belonging to somebody else. For this offence the former was fined 2 soldi and the latter 4, but this figure was later corrected; it even looks as if it has been replaced by a zero, which would mean that the fine had been cancelled, either because the charge had been proved unfounded or, for special reasons, the act had been justified.

And so, throughout the "rasse" of 1484, a girl and two boys appear. We know, though, that there were two Merici daughters. For some reason – age or something – the two girls are not found implicated together

in breaking the law.

All the biographers have said that Angela's sister was the elder of the two; she would have been born, therefore, some time between 1470 and 1473 (assuming that Angela herself was born in 1474). The elder brother, whom we met for the first time in 1479, must have been born round about the same time. We do not know, though, where to place the

<sup>61</sup> AACD, Liber Provisionum H, reg.n.8, f.38v.

<sup>62</sup> Thid for

<sup>63</sup> AACD, Liber Provisionum G, reg.n.7, f.268v.

<sup>64</sup> AACD, Liber Provisionum H, reg.n.8, f.8r.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., f.10r.

birth of the younger brother. Some time after 1474 seems likely, but this is only a hypothesis to which we do not want to give any other weight or value than that of a hypothesis.

In the same register, on 3 July 1485, the two boys are incriminated again, this time for having pulled up some "pezolos" and carried them off.

As for the "filia", her name is never given; thus we cannot say whether it is Angela herself who is involved here, or her sister, about whose eternal salvation she was to be so anxious later. The fact that we did not find any "rasse" involving the two sisters together suggests that Angela may have had a certain moderating influence on her older sister when she was with her, or else she may have stayed at home to do the housework or to look after a younger brother, whose existence may be inferred from what we will be relating later on. If, on the other hand, the two sisters had taken it in turns to go to the pasture-land, the "rasse" would have distinguished, at least once or twice, between the "filia maior" and the "filia minor".

On 1 November 1486, a daughter is accused by the "camparo" Maffeo of having transported elsewhere some of the vine-poles from the family vineyard: "Jo. Merici quod filia sua alio portabat palos ... de vitibus suis ai Lavagni a monte Johannes Antonius ... Item die 28 suprascripti [October] suprascripta filia dampnificabat incidendo lignas de nemore communis Dicentiani a le castagne". 66 Perhaps the poles had been donated by the Commune for some special use, and for that reason were not to be moved. This could well have been, as the law was broken the moment the poles were transported elsewhere. In addition, the young culprit had also cut some wood on the common land. Both these tasks required a certain physical force which would have been difficult for Angela, given that she was probably not even twelve years old. Anyway, the first charge was not followed up, but the second one incurred a fine of 3 soldi.

In 1486, Giovanni Merici begins to appear as owning cattle. On 7 January his name is put down on the roll of those who have the right to pasture on the common land: "de quelli hanno libertà pascolar. Infrascripti sunt qui solvunt pasculum communis Dicentiani pro libris infra anotatis pro anno 1486... Zuan de Merigo per una vacha. Soldi 7".67 Thus, he has acquired the right to pasture one cow on the common land. Other animals are soon added, but we do not know if these involved any

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., f.289v.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., f.192r.

further official registrations. From the "rasse", anyway, we learn that Giovanni Merici also owned three goats.<sup>68</sup>

Still in the same year, his wife is accused of picking a basketful of grapes from the family vineyard at the Lavagni, 69 but once again it is rec-

ognised that the accusation is unfair and the fine is cancelled.

Indeed, the zeal of the "campari" often seems to have made them overstep the limits of truth: "Johannes Merici acusatur per Betinum camparium cum ipse die suprascripti [30 September] dampnificavit incidendo lignas zaradellorum genestrorum in nemore communis Dicentiani al monte de la castagna hora Ave Mariae et asportavit domum. Item ipso die tempestive revertit ipse Johannes in ipso nemore dampnificavit incidendo lignas ut supra". But there is a note of clarification in the margin: "Dixit quod solum incessit unum lignum pro necessitate, et incessit in illo Arici Somelli".<sup>70</sup>

From 1488 onwards, as we have already said, they begin to record the "rasse" in a special register. The offences with which the Mericis are charged henceforth are mostly related to cattle. On 7 May a son would appear to have trespassed with two cattle and four goats on the common land, but his father had been able to refute it and the charge was dropped. As for the daughter, two days running, she had crossed over a field with two cattle: "Johannes Merici quod fillia sua dampnificavit cum bestiis 2 bovinis in faciendo transitum per blados Johannis de la Pola et crastinum 2 suprascripti [November] per suprascriptum camparium". No fine is indicated in the margin.

In 1489 the economic situation of the Mericis must have been quite good, judging from the accusation of 3 June which mentions three cattle and four goats, 3 and the "rassa" of 10 June which accuses Giovanni of ploughing his land, on a feast-day, with no less than seven people: "Infrascripti omnes denuntiati fuerunt per Cristoforum de Franzonibus laborantes ut infra, die suprascripti festum Sancti Defensoris: ... Zuan de Merigo a fat zapar cum personi sette". A note in the margin says "Negat". But for anyone to be accused of employing seven people to till

his land, his territory could not have been all that small.

During the last three years, 1490, 1491 and 1492 (the register for the following years is missing) the cattle mentioned in the "rasse" decrease

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., f.230r.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., f.275v.

Ibid., f.283r.
 AACD, Libro delle rasse, reg.n.40, f.17v.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., f.71v.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., f.108r.

in number: first of all the goats disappear; in 1492, there are two cattle at the beginning, then five in April, two in May, then only one, and in July there are two once more.

The wife is mentioned again on 12 October 1490;75 the daughter does not appear again after 15 August 1491.76 This is the last date, in fact, on which two boys and a girl appear together: "Duo filii et una fillia Johannis Merici die 15 suprascripti [August] dampnificaverunt ficos Tomasini de Laude a la chidena acusantur [?] per ipsum Tomasinum et dampnificaverunt millium in Strovezari".77 This time, it is not the animals who are responsible; the three culprits had probably stolen the figs and caused some damage in a field of millet belonging to another farmer.

This last "rassa" raises a legitimate question: Is it really likely that a boy, who would now be more than twenty (as the eldest Merici son must have been) and who, according to the biographers, came from a family universally recognised as being honest and well-brought up, would have taken part in two acts of bravado such as those described in the "rasse", namely, stealing figs and, even worse, causing damage to somebody else's field? Brought up in the country, and perhaps a farmer himself, the eldest Merici son must have known the economic consequences arising from certain damages caused to land under cultivation. And these damages must have been considerable, judging from the size of the fine imposed: 4 soldi. What conclusions could be drawn from this - that the young man had not been able to get his sister to behave properly and so felt he should take some share of responsibility for the mischief done? Or perhaps that he had not been present himself and it was his other two brothers who were involved, in other words, the brother who we believe has already appeared in other "rasse", together with his sister, and a third boy who would be the youngest in the family? If this is so, then a precise meaning can be given to the "rassa" of 23 May 1491: "Johannes Merici sub custodia filii tertio ipsius et dampnificavit in prato de le mandale Tomasini de Introinis in contrata ... cum bestiis 4 bovinis aratas per ... solvendo. Soldi 4".78

Given that there is scant respect for grammar in these accusations, and that the scribe not only makes use of abbreviations but his writing can easily be described as "illegible", it would be possible to infer from the "rassa" of 23 May that there was a third Merici son. And then the "duo filii", who in 1485 had been found guilty of pulling up and carry-

Ibid., f.139v.
 Ibid., f.12r.
 Ibid., f.12r.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., f.163 [263].

ing off the famous "pezolos", could well have been the two youngest sons.

After August 1491 only one son is found in the "rasse"; the father, Giovanni, is mentioned once more on 30 July 1492.

We have gathered together here what we thought were the most important "rasse". They are a mirror of real peasant life, which sometimes can seem rather puzzling to us today. Even so, it is not difficult to imagine the interplay of envy and jealousy, especially when the accusation proved to be false. Nor must we underestimate the fact that the "campari" received their percentage on the fines that were paid. This would explain why the "rasse" came pouring down, each day filling several pages of the communal registers and sparing no-one in the village. We are thus presented with some interesting material regarding the main aspects of demography and civil status. Unfortunately, however, we do not possess the necessary criteria to interpret these "rasse" adequately, but the way lies open for further research.

As for the economic conditions enjoyed by the Mericis, we can conclude, as we have already said, that it was not a question of either wealth or poverty. The cattle and some fields must have provided them with the wherewithal to support the six or seven members comprising the family, assuring them of a modest material security.

#### 3. ANGELA MERICI

# a) Childhood and adolescence

Angela must have been very reserved about her family circumstances and her childhood. The witnesses of the "Processo Nazari" clearly show that they do not know much about them, and scarcely any important information has been discovered about these years. And yet, much later, when she is advanced in age and already surrounded by a large spiritual family, she will give proof of the strong bond which united her to her family, showing that perhaps she has not forgotten her distant past.

From the rural world, seen with her own eyes, she will borrow expressions which give such a realistic note to her language; verbs such as to plant and to dig up, to prune, to take root, all invoke images which she has never forgotten.

From her family life, she retained, no doubt, memories of the "rasse". Acts which must have been the common practice in peasant life, to her crystal-clear conscience and memory took on a sinful aspect, if not

of fraud and injustice, at least of disobedience to the statutory rules laid down by the Commune. In the Rule, in the chapter on obedience, she will dictate that it is still necessary "to obey the laws and decrees of civil and state authorities", thereby making her daughters face up to their duty of respecting the rules of the established civil authority.

And in the prayer which she suggests "to give matter, and also a means to daily mental prayer", she will say: "Grant also, Lord, pardon for the sins of my father and mother, and of my relatives ... I beg you for this by your most Sacred Passion ...".79 The years have not dimmed her

memories, her affections, her concerns.

From her father, as we have seen, Angela remembered what he had read to her and taught her. As for her sister, she related that she used to pray daily for her after her death, and with so much anguish that the Lord had intervened to assure her of her sister's eternal salvation.80 But about her mother, apart from the mention of her in the prayer, and also about her brothers, nothing fell from her lips.

With regard to herself, Angela had related how the spirit of penance and recollection had developed within her, according to what Romano

and Gallo reported at the "Processo Nazari".

The early biographers, beginning with Bellintani, added to this some details based on simple common sense and with reference to everyday life at that time, such as the games reminiscent of the liturgy, with the construction of little altars and the imitation of religious ceremonies. The customary rhythm of simple village life used to be interrupted by religious feasts, the highlight of which were the processions. Sundays and feast-days were marked in a special way by the solemn mass, attended by all the people, and this also was an entertainment. There is no need to invoke the supernatural or to resort to a stereotyped holiness, when Angela is described like any other little country child (or town child, for that matter) of her day. The tranquil games of children were a reflection of the only big events in which they participated, and which took place in the midst of bells ringing, the scent of incense, and with the costumes and standards of the confraternities.

All this had started off as an unconscious game of imitation, but, gradually, it must have become for Angela a reality of grace, a personal, conscious and deliberate orientation; a personal response to a call which she sensed even before understanding it. The spiritual game would soon become a supernatural experience.

<sup>79</sup> Regola, Chapters IX and VI respectively. D2. 80 Cf. infra, b.

It is within this perspective that one must place the episode of Angela's "flight into the desert" with her sister (or little brother, according to Bellintani): it was just another children's game, set within the much bigger game of imitating the Saints, a game, moreover, to which Angela felt personally attracted. The two young children had set off from the house with the intention of withdrawing to pray and to do penance, as they had heard in stories about the hermits. But the family, worried by their absence, had set out in search of them, and when they had found them, had brought them back home. Such is the account given by the biographers, generally placing the episode at Salò.

Perhaps the night vigils, which are attributed to Angela when she was young, should also be considered on the boundary-line between playing a game and responding, more or less consciously, to an inner call. It is known that children, given encouragement at the right moment, are capable of great generosity. But do they know how to reckon the length of one of their penance vigils? A short time spent in prayer at night could, in a child's mind, be stretched to fill the whole night. It is the later sanctity which, by projecting light on the past, transfigures and sublimates the childish gestures; but this is no reason for belittling the

impulse which gave rise to them.

What can be taken as certain about Angela's early years, is what she herself confided: a very early attraction for the contemplative, sober, retired life; the search for conditions favourable to prayer and meditation; the spirit and practice of penance. And all this interpreted and expressed as a child gifted with precocious intelligence and high sensitivity would have done, a child who was already striving to find God's presence in the little things of daily life. How far her brothers and sister followed her in this game and in her prayer, we do not know, just as we do not know how far she used to follow them in their games and work. We do not even know what household duties she undertook once she had reached her teens. There is total silence from the biographers about this period.

Three deaths which, according to tradition, followed quickly on each other, destroyed the unity of the Merici family: Giovanni, his wife and the elde daughter all died. Until some reliable contemporary evidence is discovered, it will not be possible to establish in which order and when all these deaths took place.

According to Nazari, Doneda and Lombardi,82 the father was the

81 Processo Nazari, D16.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>82</sup> Respectively: NAZARI, Vita, D17, [f.298v]; DONEDA, Vita, op. cit., pp.30-32 and 128-129; LOMBARDI, Vita, op. cit., pp.17-21.

first to die, followed by the daughter; then last, came the mother, but Nazari does not mention this. Faino <sup>83</sup> is the only one to invert the order, making the sister die first, followed by the father and finally the mother.

Nobody has advanced any special reason for this apparently close succession of deaths. There does not seem to have been any plague epidemic at that time, but there were always plenty of endemic illnesses around, just as fatal, which used to result in a whole series of deaths and against which one was powerless. This could have happened to the Merici family.

As for Angela's brothers, we found no precise information about

# b) The vision at the "Machetto"

Lombardi, in agreement here with Faino,<sup>84</sup> makes Angela fifteen years old when her father died. When Gondi wrote that Giovanni had died in 1516, he had probably got the figure sixteen in his head – Angela was entering her sixteenth year – and put it down by mistake for the father's death.<sup>85</sup>

None of the biographers dwells particularly on this death, whereas they all make special mention of the sister's death, no doubt because of the repercussions this had on Angela's mind, because of her anxieties, and, finally, because of the divine intervention to allay these, whatever form this intervention may have taken.

Romano is the first to speak about it. Angela had told him in confidence that "longing to know if her sister's soul had reached the happiness of eternal glory, she used to pray to the Lord daily ...". <sup>86</sup> Gondi echoes him. <sup>87</sup> Faino seems to suggest a kind of anguished doubt: "Angela, however, wanted an inner certainty about the state of her dear sister, and so, kneeling before the holy images of Christ and of the Virgin Mary, she used to pray fervently that they would deign to reveal such a profound mystery to her; nor would she allow a long time to pass before sending up ardent sighs to Heaven that such a grace should be granted her". <sup>88</sup> This anxiety, this need to be reassured about the eternal destiny of

<sup>83</sup> FAINO, Vita, op. cit., pp.12-17.

<sup>84</sup> LOMBARDI, Vita, op. cit., p.17; FAINO, Vita, op. cit., p.16.

<sup>85</sup> GONDI, Vita, op. cit., p.13.

<sup>86</sup> Processo Nazari, D16.

<sup>87</sup> GONDI, Vita, op. cit., p.16.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>88</sup> FAINO, *Vita, op. cit.*, pp.12-13: "Desiderava però Angela saper lo stato della cara sorella, che perciò inginocchiata avanti le sacre immagini di Christo e di Maria Vergine, li supplicava ardentemente

her sister, could well be justified by the memory of some of her sister's shortcomings and the consequences arising from them, as the "rasse" would seem to prove. To Angela's sensitive soul, these childish pranks must have seemed like a sin of disobedience against one's parents, and what is more, a sin which had caused material damage, more or less voluntary, to neighbours, with all the implications that such behaviour must have had in the narrow set-up of a small village.

The intervention of God to reassure her seems to prove that her anxieties were well-founded and to indicate their extent.

Was it a sudden interior response, like a flash of lightning, or an intellectual vision, or indeed a real apparition? The one who had heard about it from the Saint herself made no attempt to find out more; he probably would not have known the right questions to ask in this area. The fact remains that later biographers took up and enlarged upon the statement of Antonio Romano: "One day, when she happened to be in one of the small fields belonging to her at Desenzano, she began praying for her sister as was her custom. And behold, about midday, she saw in the heavens a host of angels, in the midst of whom was the soul of her beloved sister, all happy and triumphant; and then suddenly, in a flash, the multitude of angels disappeared".<sup>89</sup>

As we do not intend to provide a collection of all the sources, we suggest that those who want to have a complete overall picture of them should turn to Lombardi's *Vita*. We have already mentioned his accuracy in putting together or synthesizing every possible quotation about every event, no matter how small.

We are not going to enter into the discussion as to whether the "vision" took place at Desenzano or at Salò. The majority of authors opt for Desenzano. It is only Bellintani who places it at Salò, in the district of "Le Strette", on the outskirts of Salò according to the communal registers, and near to a piece of land belonging to the Biancosis. Angelo Stefani, the author of the *Compendio di Salò*, follows Bellintani. However, there is no evidence in the *Atti dei Processi* to support this theory.

We ourselves are inclined towards the place, not far from the Grezze, called the "Machetto", where there still exists a little ruined chapel dedicated to St Francis Xavier. It was here that the children spent a great part of their early life, "just there where the road leads to the meadows and fields which once belonged, if not all, at least in part,

si compiacessero di rivelarli così profondo arcano; né lasciava longo indugio di tempo, che per ottener simil gratia non inviasse caldi sospiri al Cielo".

<sup>89</sup> Processo Nazari, D16.

<sup>90</sup> LOMBARDI, Vita, op. cit., pp.19-20, n.(b).

to the Merici family (so some people believe), and which then passed into the hands of the house of the noble Conti de Villio ...". Two of the witnesses at the Process of canonisation refer to this without any hesitation, and both of them knew the area well.

On 17 February 1772, Pietro Bagatta, who was born at Desenzano and then moved to live in Brescia, gives a traditional description of the vision of the sister (who in his account appears together with the Blessed Virgin), but he adds that the scene of this vision "was in the district called the Grezze, on the territory of Desenzano, very near the Machetto, where there is a church with a painting above the altar of the Blessed Angela among some other Saints. There is still such a vivid memory of this apparition, that every time people from the countryside have to pass the spot where it took place, they raise their caps and stop to say some prayer to Blessed Angela". 92

And Giuseppe Pace, a nobleman from Mantua living in Brescia, but who used to spend his holidays at Desenzano, on 14 March in the same year, sets out the traditional version of the vision of the sister with the Virgin Mary, at the Machetto, adding: "As well as the tradition unanimously held by everyone in the country, this fact was told to me by one Agostino Mabellini, a completely trustworthy person, who died eighteen years ago at the age of nearly ninety, and who himself had heard the story, always with the same details, from his grandparents and from the universal tradition of the country"."

In the section of the Atti del Processo devoted to the iconography and places of the Merician cult, the chapel at the Machetto is described thus: "oratorium publicum SS.mae Dei Genitrici, Sancto Francisco Xaverio ac eidem B. Angelae dicatum, quod situm est in contracta nuncupata di Macchetto... uno vel altero quasi lapide distans a Mericis praefati Oppidi atque aedificatum usque ab anno 1684 a clarae memoriae comite Christophoro Villio. In icone altaris praefati oratorii inter alios Sanctos

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>91</sup> LOMBARDI, *Ibid.* "ivi appunto, dov'è la strada che conduce ne' prati e campi, una volta (come da taluno si crede) se non tutti, almeno in parte di ragione della famiglia Merici, e poi passati nella casa de' Signori Conti de Villio...".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>92</sup> APC. Vat. 341, ff.586v-587r: "fu in contrata detta delle Grezze, sul tenere di Desenzano, in vicinanza di Machetto, ove è una chiesa con la tavola in pittura dell'altare rappresentante la Beata Angela fra di altri Santi. Si conserva poi tuttora tanto viva la tradizione di questa apparizione, che ogni volta che i contadini di quel vicinato passar debbono per quel luogo in cui avvenne, levar sogliono il cappello e fermarsi a far qualche orazione alla Beata".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>93</sup> APC. Vat. 341, f.629r-v: "Il qual fatto, oltre la tradizione unanime ed universale del paese, mi fu raccontato dal signor Agostino Mabellini, persona degna di tutta la fede, quale morì da diciotto anni sono nell'età quasi nonagenaria, che avevalo esso pure udito nelle stesse circostanze costantemente da suoi maggiori e dall'universal tradizione in paese".

depinta cernitur eadem Beata vestita more peregrinantis, librum manibus

gestans cum hoc lemmate: Beata Angela Peregrina".94

We will not dwell on the prophetic messages that Faino and others attach to this vision, but there is no reason to doubt the profound impression it had on Angela and also the incentive it gave her to persevere in the life of holiness upon which, as she herself says, she had already embarked. Romano says, in fact: "The vision of the soul which had appeared to her remained engraved on her memory; and that is why, with the vision constantly in her thoughts, she gave herself more and more earnestly to fasting, abstinence and prayer". 95

And so Angela prepared herself to face another painful trial, the

departure from the family home.

APC. Vat. 340, f.371r.
 Processo Nazari, D16.

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# Chapter II

# THE STAY AT SALÒ AND THE RETURN TO DESENZANO

When there is a break in the official documentation about Giovanni Merici's presence in Desenzano, that is, in 1492, the oral tradition takes over and helps to feed the various strands of Merician historiography, and it is this tradition which affirms that Angela stayed at Salò with her mother's relatives. But it was always limited to a few statements: that Angela in her teens, after the loss of her parents, was taken by her uncle and aunt to Salò, together with her young brother; that she spent some years there helping with the work in the house, and then returned to Desenzano, where she lived until 1516. In the meantime she had become a Franciscan tertiary.

It was necessary, therefore, to fit these slender bits of information into the framework of the period, giving them a concrete setting, and to see if there were any factors which would give them a little more substance.

Regarding Angela's daily occupations, the autobiographical evidence collected together and handed down by Canon Giacomo Tribesco¹ was already known. A lot of things had been repeated, just on the strength of tradition, but they were treated with a certain degree of benign and also suspicious tolerance. From the new documentation which we examined, we had to extract those features which would enable us to judge these things and events with a fuller knowledge of the facts. Thanks to the research we carried out, we were able to discover new facts which widen the previous areas of knowledge.

# a) Youth

Angela was, therefore, a young girl of about seventeen or eighteen years when her parents and sister died. At that time, many girls of that age, no matter what their social standing, were already married and mothers of families. However, it cannot be said that Angela was left quite alone, as she had at least two brothers. Their exact ages are not known, but we believe one of them was certainly older than Angela, and therefore in a position to shoulder the responsibilities involved in looking after the family property. The situation of the orphans, though, must have seemed rather precarious, if their uncle Biancoso de Bianchi and his wife thought it better that two of them came to stay at Salò. According to Bellintani,<sup>2</sup> this was Angela and her young brother; according to Gondi, it was Angela and her sister.<sup>3</sup> Recalling, though, the premature death of Angela's sister, and basing ourselves on the information which we were able to derive from the "rasse", we are inclined to rule out Gondi's version and favour a young brother.

Compared with Desenzano, Salò was a town of some importance. Biancosi had the title of "ser", and – as we have already said – there were not many of his fellow-citizens who bore this title. His son's name, Bartolomeo, is also preceded by "ser". Both of them could have been notaries. According to the different biographers – who have not, however, taken their research very far – Angela now found herself in a very different setting from the one at the Grezze; it offered her a more refined way of life and relationships than she had probably experienced before.

This was perhaps not Angela's first visit to Salò; one cannot exclude the likelihood of some previous visits, even if only short, to her mother's family.

It is precisely during the stay at Salò that Bellintani and Gondi,<sup>4</sup> for example, place the episode of the "flight into the desert", which we referred to in the preceding chapter as a children's game. If this was so, one would have to move it back in time and place the episode during one of those presumed visits Angela made to her uncle and aunt.

Faino, influenced by the belief that the sister had participated in the flight, thinks that the episode took place at Desenzano, when both of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> BELLINTANI, Vita, in Monumenta, op. cit., pp.80-81.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> GONDI, Vita, op. cit., pp.14-15.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> BELLINTANI, *Vita*, in *Monumenta*, op. cit., p.81, gives Angela her little brother as a companion; GONDI, *Vita*, op. cit., pp.15-16, makes her sister her companion.

them were young.<sup>5</sup> Doneda discusses the different points of view and solves the problem by attributing to Angela a deliberate desire to leave the world to lead the life of a hermit, and also an attempt to put this plan into operation by herself, without any companion.<sup>6</sup> The hypothesis would be plausible if in the neighbourhood there had been some hermitage where a young girl could take refuge. We were not able to verify the statement of G. Gariono-Bertolotti that "the belief persists at Salò that St Angela spent forty days at Madonna del Rio".<sup>7</sup> The "Madonna del Rio" was a chapel situated in a valley not far from Salò. A flight lasting so long and in such a place, if it had really happened, could not have been ignored by the biographers, but in fact they all speak about the uncle's rapid intervention to bring the fugitive back home.

Furthermore, such a flight in no way corresponds with the image of a wise and prudent woman which has come down to us through the Writings of Angela, the early biographers and tradition. This is why we ourselves, as we have already said, support the theory that it was a child-ish adventure – at Salò or Desenzano – that fits into the framework of a simple, serene life, and yet one already foreshadowing, in its aspirations,

an intense spiritual experience.

On the other hand, there is one episode related by every biographer, from Bellintani onwards, which probably belongs to the period at Salò, namely Angela's attempt to diminish the splendour of her blond hair. Her hair indeed was fair, as would be borne out by the examination of her mortal remains, about which more will be said later.

Rather than reject this incident as an edifying detail of hagiography, we prefer to look at it within the context of provincial life, under the in-

fluence of the lights (and shadows) of the Serenissima.

According to tradition, some companions had admired Angela's beautiful blond hair, assuring her that with such hair she would have no difficulty in finding a husband. And then she had tried to tarnish this beauty with a mixture of ashes and soot.

Blond hair was the latest fashion in Venice: "... from the fifteenth century it became fashionable to bleach one's hair. To do this, all the Venetian women of fashion used to wet their hair with a small sponge attached to the end of a stick; they tinted their hair with different waters and washed it in strong soapy water mixed with a thousand aromatics, tartar from wine-barrels, orange-peel, ashes, egg-shells, sulphur and a hundred and one other

<sup>5</sup> FAINO, Vita, op. cit., pp.11-12.

DONEDA, Vita, op. cit., pp.32-33 and 129-130, n.12.
 GARIONI-BERTOLOTTI, S. Angela, ed. 1971 cit., p.62, n.4.

vanities. To dry their hair, they used to expose themselves to the sun on the terraces of the houses, in those open wooden galleries called belvederes ...".8

No wonder the paint-brush of Venetian artists used to linger with pleasure on the tawny locks of the women whose portraits they were painting.

In the light of this precept of Venetian beauty, it is easy to understand the spontaneity of the compliment paid to Angela by her companions; her own response to it had been an immediate but firm defence of her intention to remain a virgin.

Perhaps it is also during this period that another episode took place, one related by the various biographers, beginning with Bellintani, and he could have taken it down from the lips of some pious soul from Salò, or from popular tradition: Angela had gone one day to the Isola dei Frati, situated opposite Salò, accompanied by some friends. These had offered her a salad of herbs and flowers, but Angela, finding the dish too tasty perhaps, had thrown a handful of earth on to the plate. The flowers were probably wild marguerites or daisies, or even violets; there would not yet have been any bunches from the robinia, which was only imported much later from America and which today covers the Brescian countryside. But it might have been the custom to add some other flowers or sweet-smelling herbs: simple folk have the art of recognising edible herbs and flowers.

Angela had reacted quickly. Did she want perhaps to make an act of protest against the light-hearted and fashionable society in which she found herself? Or did she simply want to repulse a temptation to indulge her taste? At any rate, this gesture reveals a trait of Angela's personality, her rapidity of decision, not without a certain emotional streak, as was perhaps evidenced in her immediate reaction to the compliment about her blond hair, and which would reveal itself also on other occasions.

As for Angela's normal occupations at Salò, we know, through what she confided directly to Canon Giacomo Tribesco, that they were of a typically domestic nature: "... when she was young, staying with her

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> POMPEO MOLMENTI, La Storia di Venezia nella Vita privata, dalle Origini alla caduta della Repubblica. V. ediz. corretta ed accresciuta sulla IV interamente rifatta. Parte II. Lo splendore. Bergamo 1911, Istituto Ital. d'Arti Grafiche Editore. Cf. p.398, quoting: PASSI, Donneschi difetti, disc. XXIII, Venezia 1618: "... dal secolo decimoquinto cominciò la moda d'imbiondirsi i capelli. A tal fine tutte le Veneziane di garbo si bagnavano la testa con una sponzetta ligata a la cima di un fuso, si tingevano le chiome con acque diverse, e le lavavano con liscia forte, con mille aromati dentro, lume di feccia, scorze di arancia, cenere, scorze di uovo, solfo e mille altre vanità. Per rasciugarle, si esponevano al sole sopra i tetti delle case, in quelle logge scoperte di legno chiamate altane...".

relatives, she carried out all those usual chores which women do in a house, such as washing the clothes, sieving, making bread, carrying wa-

ter, and many other tasks".10

Perhaps it is as well to recall to mind today what was involved in the big washes, with the bulk of the bed and table linen for a whole season. These washes were seldom done during the year; all the women of the house rallied round to give a hand, and sometimes it was necessary even to bring in some neighbours. It was an operation which lasted several days: after a quick preliminary wash in cold water, the linen had to be piled into huge tubs, the water brought to the boil with cinders and kept at the boil, by continually poking the fire lit under the enormous copper. Throughout the day, water had to be poured into the tub, making sure it soaked right through to the bottom; then it was collected and brought to the boil again before starting once more to pour it into the tub. This operation was repeated the following day, and even a third day, if it was necessary. The wet linen then had to be carried out in large wicker baskets to the river or lake to be rinsed.

This was followed by stretching out the washing on the grass, if the field was near, or otherwise on lines hung on the threshing floor or in the courtyard. When it had been dried by the sun or the wind, it was brought in and folded before being piled away, with little bunches of sweet-smelling herbs, in the large cupboards or chests.

There was also the more frequent washing of the personal linen. This was done in smaller tubs, but with the same ritual, and it always involved plunging one's arms into the cold - or even icy - water for

the rinsing.

This was the normal life of women in the house when they were unable to have any domestic help to assist them with all the household tasks.

Sifting the flour to separate it from the bran was already a much lighter occupation. Angela used to do the washing, sift the flour, knead the dough for the bread, draw water from the well, the fountain or the stream, and carry it home in a creaking bucket.

This excursus into the domestic activities may seem a useless digression, but it touches closely the concrete world in which Angela moved when she was young, and it makes direct reference to the kind of life

which she herself said she had led.

Angela may already have acquired the taste for reading after having learnt to read at Desenzano. If not, then she probably would have acquired and developed it in her new surroundings, with their openness to all kinds of interests.

Agostino Gallo and Giacomo Chizzola, two witnesses at the "Processo Nazari", both agree in their testimony that Angela knew how to read, and with understanding. The former affirms that she used to read a lot of holy books, even though she had never been taught the alphabet; and the latter is amazed that "she had understood Latin as well as she did", given that she had never studied Latin letters.<sup>11</sup>

Both these statements clearly refer to the absence of any systematic instruction, such as those in a privileged situation could lay claim to,

with the help of a private tutor or a school-master.

Let us make a little parenthesis here on teaching methods of the period, in reply to an objection which is often raised regarding the fact that Angela's knowledge of reading did not include knowing how to write. This is indeed a phenomenon which occurs even in our own day.

It may be of interest to refer here to some evidence that goes back to the beginning of the 16th century. We are borrowing an autobiographical page from the Brescian mathematician, Nicolò Tartaglia, who had had the good fortune to attend the classes of a school-master. It confirms the clear separation which used to exist at that time between learning to read and learning to write. In a dialogue with Gabriele Tadino, a Knight of Rhodes and prior of Barletta (hence the initial "P" in the course of the dialogue), Nicolò is telling him what had happened during the first stage of his journey into the world of culture: "N. Before the death of my father, I was sent for some months to a reading-school, but because I was very young at the time, in other words, only five or six years old, I do not remember the name of the master. It is true that later, when I was about 14, I went of my own free will, for about 15 days, to a writing-school, with a master called Francesco, and during this time I learnt how to write the A.b.c. as far as the letter "k" in businesslettering'. P. 'Why only up to "k" and no further?' N. 'Because the terms of payment (with the said teacher) consisted of paying him a third before putting pen to paper, another third when I knew the A.b.c. as far as "k"; and the rest when I knew the whole A.b.c. And because, within the time allowed, I was unable to find the money needed to settle what I owed (and because I was eager to learn), I managed to get hold of some of his

<sup>11</sup> D16.

completed Alphabets and some specimen copies of his lettering; and I did not return there any more, as I learnt by myself from these; and so, from that day onwards, I did not go to him, or to any other tutor, but took as my sole companion a daughter of poverty, called Industry'". <sup>12</sup>

Angela certainly started reading without having received any instruction from a master, as Gallo and Chizzola affirm. She probably had learnt to spell by herself, perhaps with some help from her father. Her mother also may have known how to read. Angela, therefore, would have begun to read with the means at her disposal. Her intuitive intelligence and openness to things of the spirit would have led her to make the acquaintance of the printed books which were coming off the very busy printing-presses in Brescia and Venice, and which offered, in addition to the Holy Scriptures, the works of the Fathers of the Church.

### c) Austere life

We spent some time above on the labours involved in certain domestic tasks, because Canon Tribesco heard Angela refer to them as forming the background of her ascetical life: "She used to carry out all those tasks ... and yet she did not eat anything throughout the week except on Thursdays [and on Sundays, adds Canali], and then only a piece of bread no bigger than half the palm of a hand; and with her right hand she indicated to me on the left hand the amount of bread she used to eat".<sup>13</sup>

This seems to present a problem of interpretation. What is the meaning of the words: "she did not eat"? Do they imply the abstention from any kind of food (a natural fast), or simply that restriction on food as a mortification, commonly called church fasting?

<sup>12</sup> NICCOLÒ TARTAGLIA, Quesiti et inventioni diverse de Nicolò Tartalea Brisciano. Riproduz. in facsimile dell'edizione del 1554 edita con parti introduttorie da Arnaldo Masotti. Pubblicazione celebrativa del Quarto Centenario della morte di Niccolò Tartaglia, Brescia, Ateneo di Brescia, 1959, Libro VI, ff.69v-70r. "N. 'Avanti che mio padre morisse, fui mandato alquanti mesi a scola di leggere; ma perché a quel tempo io era molto piccolo, cioè di età de anni cinque in sei, non me aricordo el nome di tal maestro. Vero è che, essendo poi di età di anni 14 vel circa, andei volontariamente circa giorni 15 a scola de scrivere, da uno chiamato maestro Francesco, nel qual tempo imparai a fare la A.b.c. per fin al k. de lettra mercantesca'. P. 'Perché così per fina al k. et non più oltra?' N. 'Perché li termini del pagamento (con el detto maestro) erano di darvi el terzo avanti tratto, et un'altro terzo quando che sapeva fare la detta A.b.c. per fina al k, et el resto quando che sapeva fare tutta la detta Á.b.c. Et perché al detto termine non mi trovava così li danari de far el debito mio (et desideroso de imparare), cercai di havere alcuni di suoi Alphabeti compiti, et essempi de lettera scritti di sua mano; et più non vi tornai, perché sopra de quelli imparai da mia posta; et così, da quel giorno in qua, mai più fui, né andai da alcun'altro precettore, ma solamente in compagnia di una figlia di povertà, chiamata Industria". 13 D25.

Let us go back to the earliest sources, beginning with the evidence given at the "Processo Nazari", <sup>14</sup> in search of some more precise information.

Antonio Romano, who had given shelter to Angela for nearly fourteen years, affirms under oath: "... and I do not remember having ever seen her eat meat, but only fruit and vegetables; she used to drink only water". And Agostino Gallo, who had given her hospitality at Cremona, and then again for some time at Brescia, confirms that she did not drink wine or take any other drink, and that she always used to eat "only little bread, but a little more fruit and vegetables, and even these very sparingly". Romano and Gallo are describing, therefore, not a total abstention, but a limited fast.

Romano refers also to a stricter fast, but with a time limit, which Angela used to impose on herself during the novena of Pentecost: "Every year she used to eat only one meal between Ascension and Pentecost, that is, five days after the Ascension; and this meal consisted only of fruit and water".

Whereas Giacomo Chizzola, who had less contact with Angela than the two preceding witnesses, remembers "having heard it said by some trustworthy people", and having understood "that she never used to eat meat except in the case of illness and, what is more, throughout Lent she used to eat only on Sundays, and even then she just ate very ordinary food, such as fruit and vegetables".

From Romano's testimony of a simple regime of fasting and abstinence kept up throughout the year (with an almost absolute fast in preparation for Pentecost), and Gallo's testimony of a diet of fasting and abstinence, one passes by "hearsay" to an almost total fast throughout Lent, always with a vegetarian diet.

Nazari, in his *Vita*, confirming the abstention from meat, which no-one questions, adds: "From the Ascension of Our Lord to Pentecost, she used to eat only one meal during these nine days; she also used to fast on bread and water every Friday of the year and every day during Lent, except on the Fridays of Lent when she ate nothing at all". Nazari's position is closer to the moderate view of Romano and Gallo.

Among the people, however, devotion, taste for the extraordinary, reputation for sanctity, all combined together to exaggerate the actual facts as noted by the eye-witnesses, giving them the dimension of a legend.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> D16.

<sup>15</sup> D17.

Bellintani, who later on found himself in a position to collect together the tales which were circulating round Brescia and Salò, writes clearly: "Her food for the whole day was, at the most, a small piece of bread. During Lent, she used to eat no food at all for three days in the week. The other three days, she used to put in front of her three nuts, three chestnuts or three figs, or even an apple, and tell her body to choose what would please it most, because she would only eat one of these things on that day, and nothing else. She would eat bread only on the holy day of Sunday, and then only a very little, as already said. Sometimes she used to spend the whole week without any earthly food, content to be nourished by the bread of the Angels, the Most Holy Body of Jesus Christ; and then, to make a distinction on Sundays, she used to take one slice of bread on that day". 16

This position, which stands in contrast to that of the more creditable witnesses, will be adopted by Gondi, <sup>17</sup> Faino, <sup>18</sup> Doneda, <sup>19</sup> and Lombardi. <sup>20</sup> All four take the same extreme line as Bellintani; for them "not to eat" means to eat no food at all. Doneda even concludes that "Angela's small stature was probably due, in great part, to the fact that during her youth she ate practically nothing, at a time when she was carrying out the heavy household-work already mentioned". <sup>21</sup>

As for Stefani,22 he notes that Angela "was always careful to devote

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> BELLINTANI, Vita, op. cit., BQ, ms.B.VI.30, f.[5v]. "Il cibo di tutto un giorno, quando ella più mangiava, era solo senza altro un pezzetto di pane. La quaresima passavasi tre giorni la settimana senza cibo di sorte alcuna; negli altri tre giorni, inanzi si metteva tre noci, o tre castagne, o tre fichi, overo un pomo, dicendo al corpo suo che prendesse qualcosa di quelle più gli gradisse; perché di una sola di quelle, et non d'altro, havevasi quel giorno a nudrire. Solo il santo giorno della domenica mangiava pane, ma però molto poco, come si è detto. Passavasi talvolta ancora tutta la settimana senz'altro cibo terreno, contentata et sostentata del pane de gli Angeli, il Sacratissimo Corpo di Giesù Christo; et all'hora, per far differenza dalla domenica a gli altri giorni, haverebbe in quella presa una sola fetta di pane".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> GONDI, *Vita, op. cit.*, pp.20-21.

18 FAINO, *Vita, op. cit.*, p.17.

DONEDA, Vita, op. cit., pp.34-35.
 LOMBARDI, Vita, op. cit., pp.22-23.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> DONEDA, Vita, op. cit., p.35: "l'essere stata Angela di picciola statura anzi che no, fosse in gran parte provenuto dalla quasi estrema inedia tollerata in sua gioventù, congiunta con le non leggieri fatiche testé accennate". Doneda is making allusion here to the domestic tasks enumerated by Tribesco.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> [ANGELO STEFANI] *Compendio Storico della Vita della B. Angela...*, Salò, 1771, pp.30-31: "ebbe sempre pensiero di darsi all'astinenza, che in sostanza non fu se non un continuo digiuno... Non si cibava di carni, se non in tempo d'infermità; si asteneva da ciò che potesse sollecitare la gola, contentandosi di riparare le perdute forze con scarsissimo cibo. Era maggiore la sua astinenza in tempo di quaresima, poiché passava talvolta più giorni senza ristorarsi; e quel tempo che va di mezzo all'Ascensione e la Pentecoste, era da lei impiegato in orazione più fervente o lunga... E fama tramandata a noi da alcuni Scrittori, che scrissero di lei, che in que' dieci giorni altro cibo non prendesse che la santa Eucaristia".

herself to abstinence, which was virtually nothing but one continuous fast.... She did not take meat except when she was ill; she abstained from anything which might encourage indulgence in taste, contenting herself with the scantiest of food to restore any lost strength. During Lent, she abstained even more, because at times she used to spend several days without taking any nourishment; and the time between Ascension and Pentecost used to be spent by her in longer and more fervent prayer ... Word has come down to us from some Writers, who have written about her, that during these ten days she took no other nourishment but the Holy Eucharist". Stefani seems to us to reflect an intermediary position between that of the eye-witnesses and the extreme view of Bellintani and some of his followers.

We cannot refrain from giving the reasons which incline us to interpret the phrase "she did not eat", used by Tribesco, as meaning a "fast" and not a total abstention from food.

The fast which the Church laid down for certain days and certain periods of the year allowed one main meal a day, without any limit about the quantity or any restriction about the quality, save for the obligatory abstinences. A light morning meal called "frustulum" was allowed, and also a light supper in the evening. It was not forbidden to drink between meals (wine, water). Such a fast could be sustained for a few days, but kept up for any length of time, it certainly became burdensome. There is no doubt at all that if it was prolonged throughout the year, year after year, it was not an easy penance to endure, and it presupposed a good physical constitution, plenty of energy and generosity as well as a psychological equilibrium rarely found, without speaking of a very special grace from God.

For a young girl who was still growing, and who was not yet obliged to keep this rule, it was certainly premature to practise continually the fasts of the Church. With good reason the relatives might not give their approval to it or share in it; but, finally, they gave their consent, on condition that Angela suffered no ill effects from it. Whereas a total abstention from food, which is what some of the authors mentioned above implied, would have aroused justifiable anxiety and opposition in the family, as well as curiosity and gossip among the townsfolk, since news of it would have got about. And the matter, grossly exaggerated by popular credulity, would have become part and parcel of a much wider oral tradition; but there is no trace of any such tradition.

In addition there is a psychological factor which makes us incline towards the "ecclesiastical fast" in preference to the total "natural fast". Angela, so reluctant to speak about herself, so anxious to avoid certain forms of spiritualism which bordered on exhibition and left the way open to the sin of pride,<sup>23</sup> was not a person to impose on herself any spectacular or indiscreet penances; these would have been in marked contrast to that equilibrium which was hers and to which her whole life and writings bear witness.

Angela had made a free choice, opting for a hard and penitential life with all the enthusiasm of youth, with the impulse of a spontaneous but well-disciplined temperament, coupled with the determination of an enlightened will, but also with the prudent wisdom that came to her by listening to the Holy Spirit. One indisputable fact would very soon justify these voluntary fasts: Angela's decision to ask to join the Third Order of the Friars Minor of the Strict Observance.

### d) The Franciscan tertiary

Angela's membership of the Third Order of St Francis is one of the most documented biographical pieces of information, even in the official documents. It would suffice to recall the petition Angela herself made to the Holy See in 1532,<sup>24</sup> seeking to be dispensed from the obligation of being buried in a Franciscan church. The official transcription of this petition <sup>25</sup> begins thus: "Exponitur Sanctitati Vestre pro parte oratricis Angele de Salodio mulieris Brixiensis diocesis sororis Tertii Ordinis Sancti Francisci...".

The letter from the Sacred Penitentiary is sent to the "dilectae in Christo Angelae de Salodio mulieri Brixiensi Sorori Tertii Ordinis S. Francisci", <sup>26</sup> and Angela is called "soror Tertii Ordinis S. Francisci" in some of the notarial acts. <sup>27</sup> The *Processo Nazari* is inscribed to the "Reverenda Madre Suor Angela Terzebita" (that is, dressed as a Tertiary). Romano will testify that "she took the habit of the Third Order of the Friars Minor of St Francis.... She did not tell me where this took place ...", adding that he had known her when she was already wearing that habit. <sup>28</sup> Agostino Gallo will make a similar statement. <sup>29</sup>

When, where and why did Angela enter the Third Order? Such questions rise spontaneously, but we do not possess the necessary information to give comprehensive answers to them.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> See *Processo Nazari* (D16) concerning what Angela confided to Agostino Gallo about the danger of extraordinary gifts, more or less authentic.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Up to date it has not been possible to find the original of the petition addressed to the Holy See.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> D8. <sup>26</sup> D9.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> D6 and D28.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> D16.

The date, for example, is completely uncertain. Some time must have elapsed before the uncle and aunt, who were the guardians of the young orphan girl, would take on the responsibility of giving their consent. It is true that the Third Order was a way of life which was not binding on the future, even marriage not being excluded, and that it seemed to respond to those things which attracted Angela, drawn as she was to a life of solitude, recollection and penance, but it entailed some obligations which the uncle and aunt must have taken into serious consideration. The Franciscans, on their side, would not have accepted a young girl if they had not known her very well and had not had some proof of her seriousness and steadfastness.

As for the place, a guess can be made that Angela's admission took place at Salò, since at that time there was no Franciscan convent yet at Desenzano. Moreover, in the transcription of the petition and in the letter of the Sacred Penitentiary, which we have mentioned, she is called "Angela of Salò". As these two documents are concerned about a special disciplinary matter relating to the Franciscan Third Order, the title "of Salò" could well refer to the place where Angela was admitted. In fact, she is not called by this title in any other document.

According to Angelo Stefani, the Friars Minor of the Observance at Salò "at that time not only had the convent of S. Bernardino, erected there in 1476, but they used to say mass and also administer the sacraments in the church called 'della Disciplina', situated quite close to the Biancosi house where she was living".<sup>30</sup>

As for Doneda, he does not exclude the possibility that Angela took the habit of a tertiary at the Isola di Garda, also called "Isola dei Frati",

not far from Salò,31 but this is simple conjecture on his part.

Regarding the motive behind Angela's decision to enter the Franciscan Third Order, Agostino Gallo reported at the "Processo Nazari" that he had several times heard it said that it had been "so that it would be easier for her to go to mass, to confession and to communion, because at that time lay-people were not allowed to receive communion often".<sup>32</sup>

32 D16.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> [Stefani], Compendio, op. cit., pp.26-27: "... in quel tempo non solo avevano il convento di S. Bernardino eretto fin dal 1476, ma operavano al sacro altare, e ministravano sacramenti anche nella chiesa detta della Disciplina, pochissimo discosta dalla casa Biancosi dove ella abitava". For the vast reforming movement of the Franciscan Observance, cf. MARIO FOIS, I Papi e l'Osservanza Minoritica, in Il Rinnovamento del Francescanesimo - L'Osservanza, Atti dell'XI Convegno internazionale di Studi Francescani, Assisi, 20-21-22 ottobre 1983, pp.31-105; MARIO FOIS, Il fenomeno dell'Osservanza negli Ordini religiosi tra il 1300 e il 1400 - Alcune particolarità della Osservanza francescana, in Lettura delle fonti francescane attraverso i secoli: il 1400, Roma 1981, Ed. Antonianum, pp.53-105.

From the 3rd to the 5th centuries, there had been the practice of daily communion in the Church, but then followed centuries of decline which led the Fourth Lateran Council to lay down the precept of communion at least once a year.

Between the 14th and the 15th centuries, Tauler, Gerson and Gabriel Biel had advocated frequent communion, even for the laity. But the arguments of the first, the enthusiasm of the second and the ardent exhortations of the third represented a new direction in eucharistic devotion. This movement would culminate in the Tridentine decrees of the 16th century, but many obstacles had to be overcome before the practice was accepted by the universal Church. Italy, together with Spain and Germany, had been rather refractory to the wind of this innovatory trend. Confessors and pastors continued to follow restrictive guidelines for giving out frequent communion, even in the case of people leading a holy life.<sup>33</sup>

Even the statutes of pious associations and the rules of the Third Orders, while enjoining very long prayers, prolonged fasts and other corporal austerities, prescribed only a very limited number of confessions and communions during the year.<sup>34</sup>

The Franciscan Third Order in this respect followed the same custom as the other pious societies: the primitive Rule prescribed eucharistic communion at Christmas, Easter and Pentecost. Nor were the monastic rules any more generous, since they only allowed it twelve to fourteen times a year. The Oratories of Divine Love, which sprang up between the 15th and 16th centuries, prescribed to their members the reception of eucharistic communion at least four times a year, in addition to Christmas and Easter. It is only in the second half of the 16th century that the practice of monthly communion appears in the various associations.<sup>35</sup>

The Franciscans may not have been the first, but they were among the first to promote the confraternities of the Blessed Sacrament, even if almost a century elapsed between the foundation of Fra Cherubino da Spoleto and the one established in the Cathedral of Milan in 1372; <sup>36</sup> and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> J. Duhr, Communion fréquente, in Dictionnaire de Spiritualité Ascétique et Mystique Doctrine et Histoire publié sous la direction de Marcel Viller SJ, assisté de F. Cavallera et M. Olphe-Galliard SJ, avec le concours d'un grand nombre de collaborateurs. Beauchesne et ses Fils, Paris 1953, fasc.XI et XII, col.1265-1273.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> PIETRO TACCHI VENTURI SJ, Storia della Compagnia di Gesù in Italia narrata col sussidio di fonti inedite. Volume I, parte I, La vita religiosa in Italia durante la prima età della Compagnia de Gesù, 3ª ediz. notevolmente accresciuta. Ediz. "La Civiltà Cattolica", Roma 1950. Cf. "La frequenza della comunione avanti e lungo il sec. XVI", pp.249-269.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. "Il culto dell'Eucarestia nel Cinquecento", pp.217-228.

we would not be able to say if any other "schools" or confraternities of the Blessed Sacrament – or which ones – came into being during that interval of time. Bernardino da Feltre established one of them in Brescia in 1494. But the purpose of these confraternities was concerned rather with the exterior display of the eucharistic cult: to give a worthy place in the churches to the sacred species, by keeping them in suitable tabernacles; to use sacred vessels made at least of valuable metal, if it was not possible to have them in precious metal; to see that the Blessed Sacrament was watched over night and day by a lighted lamp, symbol of faith and love; and to arrange for the Viaticum to be carried with some solemnity to the dying.

This revival of the cult, however, did not include any increase in the frequency of eucharistic communion. In the Bull of 21 August 1508, which solemnly confirmed the first Roman company of *Corpus Christi*, founded in the church of S. Lorenzo in Damaso, Julius II himself promoted the exterior cult, but he made no mention of the reception of the sacrament. Several decades still had to pass between the renewal of the cult and of the exterior devotion, and a deepening understanding by the clergy of the eucharistic sacrifice which would make them want to celebrate mass daily. Among the most effective promoters of frequent communion, mention must be made of Antonio-Maria Zaccaria, Cajetan of Thiene, and especially Ignatius of Loyola with his early followers.<sup>37</sup>

But at Brescia in Angela's day, the situation seems to have been fluctuating and it is not clear how far it was restrictive, or what attempts were made to introduce frequent communion and how successful they were. The fact remains that when Giovan Pietro Ferretti, bishop "in pontificalibus suffraganeus, locumtenens et vicarius generalis", issued the Constitutions for the Church in Brescia in 1545,38 he dissuaded the parish clergy from allowing communion too frequently, warning them "ne sacram Eucharistiam laicis personis quotidie impendant, sed nec etiam alio quovis modo frequentius, nisi fortasse de consilio nostro..." and giving as his reason: "quod nec etiam (ut legimus) in ipsis Eremis, atque antiquis coenobiis vix sanctis viris permittebatur...". Such is the position expressed in Chapter XIII, "De laicis omni die non communicandis".

<sup>37</sup> Dictionnaire, op. cit., col.1270.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup> Constitutiones et Edicta observanda in sancta Brixiensi Ecclesia, et eius tota Dioecesi, Noviter per Reveren. in Christo patrem, Iur. utr. doct. D. IOAN. PETRUM FERRETTUM Rhavenn. Mylen. Episcopum, Suffraganeum, Locumtenentem, et Vicarium generalem promulgata. Brixiae, Impressit Damianus Turlinus, die VII Septembris, a. MDXLV. The copy in the Vatican Library is numbered Racc. I.IV.2177 (int.3).

And then in Chapter XXXXVII, "Declaratio Cap.XIII super communione quotidiana", Ferretti tones down the severity of this instruction by referring the matter to God, and to selected, experienced and Godfearing confessors, so that they may examine very carefully the dispositions of mind and heart, taking the decision upon their conscience. The "Declaration" says in fact: "Super quo causam huiusmodi Deo, discretis, timoratis, ac peritissimis confessoribus, ut mentium et animorum fibras funditus, ne facile seducantur, excutiant, illorum conscientias arctius in Domino praegravantes, ex consilio nostro aeque prorsum remittimus".

Later, when another bishop of Brescia wanted to restrict communion for the laity to three days a week, the Congregation of the Council would send him a decree – but this would be in 1587 – reminding him of the Tridentine teaching and urging him to be careful to see that well-disposed lay-people were not prevented from communicating daily.<sup>39</sup>

We do not know how often Angela had hoped to receive communion by becoming a tertiary; certainly it would have been the maximum allowed by her confessor or spiritual father. Agostino Gallo was to relate that "she used to go to communion every day she could". 40 This sentence would seem to exclude daily communion, at least during the period he knew her, but it does suggest a frequency not granted to everyone. By belonging to a such a prestigious religious family as the Friars Minor of the Observance, Angela was shielded from people's inquisitive comments and from any reproach of singularity. Just as the new title of "Sur Anzola" gave her the right to frequent the church and the sacraments more, so her tertiary habit served to justify her natural reserve; and the Franciscan Rule set the official seal on her determination to follow Christ more closely and justified an austerity of life which she had freely chosen in response to a personal call. This last argument could well have been a determining factor in Angela's decision, together with the prospect of approaching the sacraments more frequently.

The biographers have not spent any time on the specific commitments which Angela was required to observe once she had entered the Third Order. We would like to give a summary of them here, taking them from the Rule contained in the Bull "Supra Montem" of Nicholas IV: 41

- a commitment for life: "nullus post ipsius Fraternitatis ingressum de

<sup>39</sup> Dictionnaire, op. cit., col.1372.

<sup>40</sup> Processo Nazari, D16.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup> Bullarium Franciscanum Romanorum Pontificum Constitutiones, Epistolas ac Diplomata continens tribus ordinibus Minorum, Clarissarum et Poenitentium a Seraphico Patriarcha Sancto Francisco Institutis concessa... Tomus IV, Romae 1768, Typis S. C. de Propaganda Fide, pp.94-97.

eadem egredi valeat ad saeculum reversurus: possit tamen transitum ha-

bere liberum ad Religionem aliam approbatam" (Chap. II);

- a habit in the form of a tunic, with a cape, in ordinary material, and a small neckerchief of linen or hessian, without any frills. Silk ribbons and other adornments were not allowed (Chap. III); nothing was said about hair-styles, as women used to keep their heads covered at the time of St Francis;

- the prohibition from attending disreputable shows and banquets, fash-

ionable meetings and balls (Chap. IV);

- abstention from meat four days every week (except when they coincided with big feasts); fast every Friday, and also every Wednesday between All Saints' and Easter, together with any necessary fasts fixed by the ordinary. Daily fast during Advent and Lent; between Easter and the feast of St Francis, permission for three meals a day (except on Friday), for anyone who had to do heavy work (Chap. V);

- confession and communion at Christmas, Easter and Pentecost (Chap.

VI);

- recitation of the canonical Hours;

- to be a peacemaker among fellow brothers and sisters, and also among strangers when this was possible;

- attendance, if possible, at daily mass; participation in the communal solemn mass each month; an offering to be made for the poor or sick members; choice of a spiritual director who encouraged penance and works of mercy (Chap. XII);

- visit to sick sister members so that each week they received a visit

from a sister of the confraternity (Chap. XIV).

The Rule did not give any indication about practical activities to be carried out as a direct apostolate or as an exercise of charity and mercy: thus Angela would have been available for whatever design God had in mind for her.

# e) "The Tempter"

It is at Salò, therefore, that Angela would have acquired the habits of austere living which she kept up for the rest of her life, such as sleeping on some matting or a chair, and living on vegetables, fruit and fish.

Perhaps it is at the beginning of this penitential life that one must place the temptation which Agostino Gallo remembers because Angela herself had told him about it one day in confidence. All the biographers will later repeat the story: "In her early years, Satan appeared to her in the form of an angel of such beauty, that it exceeds anyone's belief or imagination; but God had pity on the purity of this innocent soul and en-

lightened her in such a way that she immediately threw herself, face downward, on the ground, crying out: 'Go to hell, enemy of the Cross, because I know I am not worthy to see an angel of God', and so he sud-

denly disappeared".42

A temptation to pride? to self-satisfaction? or perhaps an insidious invitation to slacken a little her drive towards God and the rigours of her asceticism? Angela does not seem to have provided any further details, or if she did, they have not come down to us. Gallo's account, stripped of any embellishment, leaves little room for the imagination. The one thing certain is that the devil tried to deceive Angela, and that her reaction, springing from a genuine humility, was instinctive and uncompromising. At the same time, it revealed a resolute personality, capable of immediate decision.

This experience made her cautious about any form of exhibitionism and singularity, as Gallo confirms in the same text.

#### 2. DESENZANO

### a) The return

It is not known how long Angela stayed with her relations at Salò before returning to her native region. Faino says that she stayed there about five years, <sup>43</sup> but gives no documentation to support this. Perhaps a brother living at Desenzano had got married and could now offer to protect his sister; or else something had changed the situation of the family at Salò, making it expedient for Angela to return to the family house, almost certainly at the Grezze. This seems to us to be a reasonable assumption, at least until some cadastral document turns up with the information that there was another dwelling-place where Angela might have lived.

At the Archivio Antico Comunale of Desenzano, the tax-register for 1523, on f.16, contains the declaration already mentioned by us: "Sur Merizi habet petiam terrae aratoriae vidatae in contrata Caser a monte Zorzo Monte, a sero Petrus Domigo. Lire 5".<sup>44</sup>

If the five lire indicate the tax that had to be paid on the property, then the land concerned would have been fairly extensive and produc-

42 D16.

43 FAINO, Vita, op. cit., p.19.

<sup>44</sup> AACD, Reg.n.56; Estimo 1523, f.16v; D14.

tive. It was still entered under the name of Angela Merici, or rather "Sur Merizi". By 1523 Angela was already living at Brescia, but it is clear that she continued to retain the ownership of the property, and this refutes the statements of Bellintani, Doneda and others, according to which An-

gela stripped herself of all her goods out of love of poverty.

The Partitario 1° and the Partitario 2° contain the credit and debit accounts of the Commune of Desenzano vis-à-vis its inhabitants. We find there, between 1504 and 1515, a Johannes Merici, or Zuan de Merigo, who must have been still comparatively young; in 1509 or 1510, in fact, he has a son, under-age or at least under his care, who is employed as a digger by the Commune for seven days at the rate of 10 soldi a day ("per zorni n.7 a rason de soldi 10 cadaun zorno"); the wage was paid to the father. Zuan himself worked in the port for the Commune. We do not know how he was related to Angela. Was he perhaps Angela's eldest brother, the one called Giovan Maria on the family-tree?

# b) The vision of the "ladder"

All the biographers, oral tradition and the tradition of the figurative arts are in agreement about one episode in Angela's life: this is the vision of the "ladder", which would later be represented in iconography as stretching between earth and heaven, with its procession of rejoicing angels and virgins.

The first to give evidence about it is Father Francesco Landini, confessor to the virgins of the Company of St Ursula at Brescia, in the extract from a letter which we have already mentioned.<sup>46</sup> The setting is the countryside, at harvest-time; it is siesta hour, that is about midday,

sidereal time.

In those days the Italian clock used to measure time in accordance with the "natural" or "solar" day, in other words by counting the twenty-four hours from the hour following sunset, and this was subject, therefore, to continuous variations according to the changing seasons.

In summer, the early morning mass used to be celebrated at the first light of dawn; by sunrise the peasants were already at work in the fields. Towards the 16th and 17th hour (that is, 10-11 hours, sidereal time), when the sun was already high and the work was becoming heavy, a

<sup>46</sup> D15. The Secondo Libro Generale, on f.38r, lists Father Landini among the confessors; there is nothing to prove that he held any other title in the Company.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>45</sup> AACD, Reg.n.45, *Partitario* 1°, 1501-1508, ff.65r, 195r; Reg.n.46, *Partitario* 2°, 1507-1543, f.35r. The son is only mentioned in *Partitario* 2°.

meal was taken, followed by a siesta, and then work would be resumed.

People had to return home before the Angelus, at sunset.

Thus, according to Father Landini, it was during the siesta at midday that Angela used to withdraw from the others to pray. One day, enraptured in God, she seemed to see heaven open and coming from it a procession of angels and virgins, in alternate pairs. The angels were playing various instruments and the virgins were singing. The tune of that song remained so imprinted in Angela's memory that she could even sing it. And as the procession files past, behold her dead sister appears, and tells Angela about her future mission to found a Company of virgins.

As we have already said, from this nucleus of essential elements, which fuses into one the two visions which are said to have taken place, the one of the sister now among the blessed in heaven, and the one of Angela's prophetic call about her mission, has grown up one of the most popular themes of Merician iconography. One can discuss – as certain biographers have done – whether or not the reference here was to a ladder of biblical memory: but, obviously, from the open heaven the procession could give the impression of descending towards earth, and to express this, perhaps Angela herself had found nothing better than a ladder with which to compare it.

Landini openly confesses that his outline of the life and figure of Angela is incomplete. He gives as his excuse his absence from Brescia, and therefore the impossibility for the time being of questioning in a fitting manner the virgins of the Company. But he affirms that he is just repeating what he had already heard from the lips of Angela's first companions. No-one, however, has told us what expressions were used by the first members of the Company when they told the story about the vision, or from which source were originally derived the details which have reached us.

There has been much discussion about the number of these heavenly visions, whether there was one of them or two different ones, with separate contents. Romano mentions only one: that of the sister (which is believed to have taken place at the Machetto); Landini, as we have seen, merges the two elements into one. Bellintani and Gondi embroider the preceding meagre evidence, and in this they are followed afterwards by a whole line of writers who linger over the description of certain details, such as the noble garments or magnificent crowns of the virgins, or even the angels with pearls on their foreheads.

Fra Giovanni da Fiesole, who painted the heavens he had gazed upon when rapt in ecstasy, interpreted their splendour by the gold and gems bedecking his angels and the blessed, and the infinite harmony by the musical instruments played by his angels. The account of the vision given by the different authors inevitably became elaborated with the stylistic features so dear to the iconography and religious literature of the time. Linked to this was the desire to reconstruct, according to the criteria of human logic, an event which, by its very nature and origin, escapes from any human category.

Whoever wanted to give a touch of realism to the account of Angela's ecstasy had to keep within the framework specific to the pictorial language of the day to describe the heavenly world. Angela herself, in order to make available to others the inexpressible celestial experience of seeing heaven opening to her, a simple creature, and allowing her to see in God her own destiny, had to have recourse to the expressions of everyday language, appropriate to the religious culture of her background, a culture certainly not very refined from the theological point of view. And everyone, hearing the story of the vision, would visualise it mentally according to the stereotyped images familiar to his or her devotion and imagination. This would explain the attention given to some of the descriptive details. To this must be added, obviously, a certain taste that people have for the extraordinary, for the dazzling when they approach the world of the spirit.

These inevitable distortions of expression in no way detract from the veracity of the fact that, in the life of Angela, a supernatural event took place, with the purpose of revealing the mission to which God was calling her. So novel was the wording of this mission, that it would require on Angela's part an unhesitating faith and courageous determination. The "sign" from heaven was aimed at getting her ready and prepared for it.

It remains to be asked when all this happened. Such a "vocational" vision – whether it was, let us repeat, an interior intuition, an intellectual vision or an exterior apparition – would seem to be better placed in the second period at Desenzano than in the first. Doneda, who discusses the number of visions and favours only one, nevertheless ends the subject by joining sides with the common tradition that distinguishes two separate events, and precisely on the strength of this very tradition. Then he recalls Cozzano's statement that, although the Company had been inspired and divinely revealed to Angela from her childhood ("fin da piccola"), she had not wanted to start it unless commanded to do so by Jesus Christ, so that it would be clear that she had acted only under the movement of the Holy Spirit.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup> COZZANO, Epistola. D22.

The same Cozzano, in the *Dichiarazione della Bolla*, uses the expression "fin da giovinetta" ("from her youth"), making it clear that Angela had founded the Company later, in her own good time, at God's command. "From her childhood" and "from her youth", in their context, are not to be understood as having any definite chronological significance. The two expressions are intended only to separate in time God's call from the actual moment of execution, with the aim of highlighting the twofold divine intervention: first, the call, and then the command to carry it out. Clearly, the faithful secretary of the "Madre" must have heard her tell the story herself, both of the first manifestation of the mission which was awaiting her, and of the decisive impulse which later had compelled her to carry it out. But how these two particular moments took place, Cozzano has handed down nothing.

# c) The "Brudazzo"

Even today the tradition is still alive in Desenzano that the Machetto and the Brudazzo are the places where Angela was rewarded with the two visions that are attributed to her. Two of the process-witnesses, Bagatta and Pace, have left some evidence of this transmission of memories.

Pietro Bagatta does not hesitate to place the vision of the ladder at the "Brudazzo ... a place situated not far from the main road which goes from Salò to Desenzano, at the entrance to another remote path, which leads to the village of Maguzzano. This same path is in a very wooded, low-lying and isolated area. And the memory of this vision has always been, and still is, so alive and constant, that at the exact spot of the above-mentioned vision one can still see a kind of ancient niche with some holy pictures painted in fresco, which with the passing of the years and the inclemency of the weather, have almost been worn away. But the memory itself has never faded away, nor the devotion of the people of that region, who often flock together here, just as to a place of veneration, so that they can commend to Blessed Angela their particular needs; the peasants also have the custom of continually bringing candles to this place to light in her honour, especially when some misfortune has befallen them, either of health or something else, and they say prayers there. These things to which I testify here regarding the above-mentioned sites of the two visions, apart from the fact that I know them personally, are still common knowledge and well-known in Desenzano".49

48 COZZANO, Dichiarazione. D24.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>49</sup> APC. Vat. 341, f.587r-v. "al Brudazzo... situato questo in poca distanza dalla strada maestra che

Giuseppe Pace is much more succinct, but he also confirms the tradition and the local devotion which expresses itself at the Brudazzo, by

lighting candles and going there on prayerful pilgrimages.<sup>50</sup>

The two testimonies are expressed in a simple, straightforward manner. Both witnesses describe with spontaneity, and from their own personal knowledge, the two places which had been singled out by the "vox populi" and had become the goal of devotional pilgrimages.

Far from feeling at ease with these and other extraordinary phenomena, such as ecstasies, stigmata, visions, Angela would always look on them with a certain mistrust, as she herself would confide to Agostino Gallo.<sup>51</sup> Thus it is very likely that she submitted the vision of the ladder to the judgment of her confessor, as is suggested by Fra Mattia Bellintani.<sup>52</sup>

### d) "Sur Anzola"

Returning to Desenzano, Angela probably resumed her former way of life, among the places and people once familiar to her. No-one has left a single item of information of any historical value about her way of life there, apart from her sharing in the work in the fields, as at the time of the "ladder" vision.

We do not know upon what grounds Guerrini based his view, quite unsubstantiated, of a "St Angela, forced by adverse circumstances to leave home, and emigrate, still young in years but already mature through experience, to Salò and Brescia, in search of work and bread".<sup>53</sup> Similarly, we feel we cannot accept his picture of the "painful youth of the orphan-girl and servant", "driven by the needs of one left so sadly

conduce da Salò a Desenzano sudetto, all'imboccatura d'altra stradella rimota, che porta verso il villaggio di Maguzzano. La detta stradella è luogo tutto boschivo, basso e rimoto. E la memoria di tale visione è sempre stata, ed è tuttavia tanto viva e costante, che nel luogo preciso della medesima si vede ancormò un antico capitello con immagini sacre dipinte a fresco, quali, per il lungo tempo e per l'intemperie delle stagioni, sonosi quasi affatto smarrite. Ma non s'è però mai smarrita la memoria e la divozione delle genti di quel contorno, quali ivi concorrono appunto sovente, come a luogo di venerazione, per ivi raccomandare alla Beata i loro particolari bisogni, e si suol anche continuamente da quei contadini portare al detto luogo de' lumi ad ardere in onore della Beata, quando massime hanno qualche disgrazia o d'infermità o di altro, recitando ivi qualche orazione. Le quali cose da me qui deposte circa i siti sudetti delle due visioni, oltre il saperle di mia propria scienza, sono ancor publiche e notorie in Desenzano".

APC. Vat. 341, f.630r.
 Processo Nazari, D16.

<sup>52</sup> BELLINTANI, Vita, op. cit., BQ, ms.B.VI.30, f.[11r-v]

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>53</sup> GUERRINI, La Compagnia, op. cit., p.110; "... Sant'Angela, costretta dall'avversa fortuna a lasciare la casa paterna, a emigrare, giovane ancora di anni ma già matura di esperienza, a Salò, a Brescia, in cerca di lavoro e di pane".

orphaned to take up domestic service in the houses of various families".54

At Desenzano, Angela must have experienced the lot of the single woman, working in the fields in so far as it was necessary to support herself, open to the needs of her neighbours on a reciprocal basis, as was the custom at the time of heavy work in the fields or in the case of unusual domestic chores.

Her open profession of evangelical life committed her to carrying out the corporal works of mercy, which included almsgiving in all its different forms, visiting the sick and accompanying the dead to the cemetery. With the spread of the confraternities of the Blessed Sacrament during those particular years, one could also add the accompaniment of the Holy Viaticum to the sick. All of this came under the general title of "works of charity", carried out together with the "good word", in the form of advice or admonition, of comfort, teaching or exhortation. In the midst of her work in the fields and in the house, Angela certainly gave plenty of time to these works of charity, and so her days were filled from morning to night.

As for Angela's "works of piety", prayers, fasts, penances with discipline and hairshirt,<sup>55</sup> these must have been a secret between herself and God. Her white linen headcovering and her name, "Sur Anzola", gave her a special position in the eyes and esteem of the people, and probably singled her out as the person to whom one could turn in need. According to Faino, Angela was known and held in esteem not only in Desenzano, but also in the surrounding district, on account of her reputation for holiness. She often visited, among others, the Patengola family, who had some property at Padenghe.<sup>56</sup> But we do not know whether Faino is relying here on a trustworthy tradition, or if he is simply drawing a conclusion a posteriori from the fact that later on Angela was the guest of Caterina Patengola at Brescia.

It must be pointed out that Faino, and Lombardi follows him in this, speaks of Caterina and Girolamo Patengola as if they were husband and wife,<sup>57</sup> but, as we shall see, Caterina's husband was called Giovan Battista, and Girolamo was their nephew. Therefore, the earlier information, on the whole, needs to be treated with great caution.

According to Bellintani, Angela went to Brescia occasionally during her stay at Desenzano, where she found a warm and affectionate wel-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>54</sup> Ibid. Prefazione, p.IX: "dolorante giovinezza di orfana e di domestica", "sospinta dai bisogni di una desolata orfanezza a servizi domestici presso varie famiglie".
<sup>55</sup> D10 and D11.

<sup>56</sup> FAINO, Vita, op. cit., p.24.

<sup>57</sup> LOMBARDI, Vita, op. cit., p.54.

come from several friends, <sup>58</sup> but there is no way of verifying the truth of this particular statement. On the other hand, we can reasonably assume that she went to Salò from time to time to fulfil her duties as a Franciscan tertiary, and also to visit the Bianchi family who had given her hospitality when she was young. But above all she must have spent those years waiting for a sign which would open to her the road she had to take to carry out the mission which the "vision of the ladder" had shown her from afar.

<sup>58</sup> BELLINTANI, Vita, op. cit., BQ, ms.B.VI.30, f.[11v].

# Chapter III

# THE YEARS AT BRESCIA: THE WITNESSES

The Franciscan superiors to whom Angela, as a tertiary, was subject, suggested that she carry out an act of charity which would entail her staying at Brescia at least for some time, namely to comfort the widow Caterina Patengola, who had lost her children. Circumstances, on the other hand, were paving the way for her to stay permanently in this city, which would become her city of adoption.

When Angela arrived at Brescia in 1516, the city was only just emerging from a blood-bath; it was still showing the wounds inflicted on it by the enemy attacks, but gradually, slowly, it was coming to life again. The noise of weapons had barely died away after years of wars, sieges, surrenders and recaptures, in a continuous series of alternating

fortunes.

In a very short time, a circle of friends would gather round Angela. Some of them would see her living from close at hand and they would leave, in different ways and circumstances, the most trustworthy biographical evidence. It is impossible for us to deal with these people in strict chronological order, as we cannot know the exact date when each one first met the "Madre Suor Angela", as they liked to call her.

About these friends, their life, their social position, either nothing was known, or the knowledge was only approximate, with the result that the few things attributed to them could raise some justifiable questions. An intensive search among the "polizze d'estimo" (PE) of the Archivio Storico Civico of Brescia helped us to identify them as individuals.

In more than 420 boxes, in fact, thousands of "polizze d'estimo" are collected together; between the 1517 set of returns and the last set we studied, that of 1568, one can see an evolution in the Christian names and surnames. The handwriting at times is almost illegible; the language often requires expert knowledge to be understood. But the contents of these "polizze d'estimo" provided us not only with information about births, marriages and deaths, but also about the composition of families and, in certain cases, the socio-economic situation of the declarants. Thus, these witnesses have taken on real flesh, so that we can now see

them living in their own time and setting, and can also correct certain inaccuracies about them often codified by tradition.

In addition to the biographical information about the menwitnesses, we will be giving information about two women who, in a special way, help us to reconstruct the setting in which Angela lived. We will be talking about some other women when we reach the events in which they are more directly involved.

### a) Caterina Patengola

The information we were able to collect together comes from the "polizze d'estimo", the short biography by Faino about Giustina, the servant-girl who later became Suor Candida in the Monastery of Santa Croce, and the *Figure* of Antonio Cistellini, already referred to.

The Patengola family, to which Angela had been sent, took its name, according to Faino, from some property they possessed at Padenghe,<sup>4</sup> a place not far from Desenzano. The house in Brescia must have been comfortable, but the atmosphere there was saddened by the deaths. Caterina, who welcomed Angela, was probably only a little older in age, but the painful voids in her life seemed to have spent her prematurely. According to the "polizze d'estimo" of 1517 and 1534, and taking into account the usual margin of inacccuracy in matters involving family dates, Caterina degli Almici di Zono, the widow of Giovan Battista Patengola, must have been born about 1470. She had had three children: Costanzo, Gandolfo and Monica.

Costanzo was the first to die, in 1513.<sup>5</sup> A Benedictine tertiary, after a short, edifying life, he had died at 22 years in the odour of sanctity. In 1516, it was Gandolfo's turn, struck by the same disease which had carried off his older brother. Monica had married, but it is not known when. In her "polizza" of 1517, Caterina declared several properties in Brescia and at Cellatica. Her brother-in-law, Agostino, was one of those who owed her money. Filling in the information about the family, she put down the name of her grand-daughter, Isabella, aged four and a half. So Monica also must have died; and what had happened to her husband, if their little girl came to be included in the grand-mother's statement about the family?

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> PE, n.225.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> FAINO, "Della serva di Dio sor Candida da Como eremitana di S. Agostino nel Convento di S. Croce", in *Brescia Beata, op. cit.*, BQ, E.I.5, ff.233-237v.

<sup>3</sup> CISTELLINI, Figure, op. cit., p.49.

<sup>4</sup> FAINO, Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Cf. FAINO, Ibid; CISTELLINI, Figure, op. cit., p.49.

In the 1534 declaration of goods, the grand-mother will still be including among the debts a residue of Isabella's dowry, which she is paying off in annual sums of 300 lire planete: "Owing to Annibal, son of the gentleman Hieronimo Averoldo, 2000 lire planete, the remainder of the dowry of the lady Isabella, his wife; I have to pay him an annual sum of L.300 until this debt of the said L.2000 has been cleared". Shis Isabella, therefore, remained a dependent of Caterina Patengola up to the time of her marriage, and it was Caterina who had to see to her dowry.

In this same 1534 declaration of property, Caterina indicates the presence in her house of a young boy of twelve, Bartolomeo. She was keeping him in her house "pro amore Dei"; and was sending him to school with the intention of seeing that he learnt a trade: "lo mando a

schola et lo volio metter d'imparar qualche arthe".

It was quite a widespread custom for "hospital-children", in other words, abandoned children, to be entrusted to families in the city, to be brought up by them until they were of age. Caterina may well have followed this custom in memory of her own children who had died so early in life, but also as an act of Christian charity, which her financial position facilitated.

A few years earlier, Caterina had had a servant, Giustina. She was a humble young girl from Como, who some time later, as we have said, had entered the Augustinian Monastery of Santa Croce, taking the name of Suor Candida. Gifted with the spirit of prophecy, at the news of Costanzo's premature death – according to Faino's story – she had predicted that Gandolfo would follow him three years later. She had also predicted to Caterina that the marriage arranged for Monica would not take place, but that a suitable suitor would present himself later; and this, in fact, is what happened.

Suor Candida had died in 1515 in the odour of sanctity. According to some sources quoted by Cistellini,<sup>6</sup> there was a picture of her on the south wall of the lower church of the monastery, with the inscription:

"Beata Candida".

The presence of this little saint in the Patengola household must have had a beneficial influence on the spiritual direction taken by Costanzo, and at the same time must have contributed towards keeping alive in the family a spirit of piety. Her entry into the convent may have

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5bis</sup> "Debito con Annibal filio del domino Hieronimo Averoldo di lire 2.000 planete, resto de la dotta de donna Isabella sua moyer, et non ne pago livello alcuno, se non che li debio dar ditti dinari ogne anno L. 300 fina al compimento de li ditti L. 2.000".

<sup>6</sup> CISTELLINI, *Ibid*.

put Caterina in touch with the monastery of Santa Croce where a saintly

Augustinian nun, Laura Mignani, was living.7

Did Angela Merici know Laura? Up to now there is nothing to prove this, but neither are there any reasons for categorically excluding the possibility, especially as the renown of Suor Laura was making the monastery of Santa Croce a centre radiating deep spirituality. Furthermore, Caterina could well have been the intermediary in bringing together these two souls, both captivated by the same ideal of sanctity,

We have no details about Angela's stay in the Patengola household, nor how long she stayed, or what kind of life she led there. She must have arrived in Brescia some time after 26 May 1516, the date when the restoration of Venetian rule in the city had given the region a certain guarantee of lasting peace after so many wars. She may have come in autumn, when the farming season was over, and after the grape-harvest in the vineyard which she possessed at Desenzano in the Caser district.<sup>8</sup>

If Romano's memory did not deceive him about the actual date, he knew Angela in the Patengola household in 1517, precisely when she was carrying out the mission of comfort, so naturally adapted to her inner riches which would overflow into the spoken word, about which all

the witnesses agree in describing as efficacious and persuasive.

One can assume that Angela, standing by her principles of austerity, did not succumb to the luxury and comfort of the house. Very likely she gave a hand with the housework, as she had done at Salò when staying with her relatives, and perhaps she used to read some page from the Holy Scriptures with Caterina to engage her in conversation; and then again she might have encouraged and helped her in distributing alms. But above all, she must have sustained and comforted Caterina with the same prospects of eternal beatitude that she would offer later to her followers, in the Prologue of the Rule and in her other Writings.

### b) Girolamo Patengola

Caterina's nephew, Girolamo, was twenty-two when Angela arrived in Brescia. He was single, and lived in his family house situated in the S. Alessandro district. His father, Agostino, was nearly sixty, and his

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Source of inspiration and spiritual mother of Bartolomeo Stella (prominent figure in the good works carried out in Brescia) and of Cajetan of Thiene, this religious counted among her correspondents Lucrezia Borgia, who became Duchess of Ferrara, and Elisabetta Gonzaga, Duchess of Urbino. The Duchess of Savoy had sent as a gift to Suor Laura, in 1502, a copy of the Holy Shroud done at Chambéry (*Ibid.*, pp.56-103 passim).

<sup>8</sup> Cf. supra, Pt.II, Ch.II, 2.a.

mother about forty. According to the 1517 declaration, living under the same roof were Nasimpasi (or Nascimpace), natural son of Agostino, aged forty; and also a housekeeper, a maid-servant and a man-servant. Agostino was contesting the transfer of the goods belonging to his dead brother, Giovanni Battista, to his sister-in-law Caterina, and affirms that he is unable to make a clear statement of his own property because of this dispute with her, stating: "As for myself, I own nothing, but everything belongs to Lady Caterina da Zona, former wife of the late Zoan Baptista".9

By the time of the tax-return of 1534, Agostino is already dead. In his own statement about the household, Nascimpace puts down his wife Bevegnuda, fifty years old, and a servant, plus some properties at Calvisano and Castenedolo. Girolamo makes his own declaration: he is thirty-eight years old, is still single, and is keeping at home Stefano, Nascimpace's son, aged twenty-two, completely at his own expense ("cum spesa di tutto el suo bisogno"). He also has a man-servant, two maid-servants and a woman who looks after his house and farm. One of the maid-servants is called Flora; she is a native of Gottolengo and is forty years old; we will meet her again among those who elect Angela on 18 March 1537. Girolamo declares in addition that he owns some properties in Brescia, at Capriano and at Gottolengo; he also possesses two saddle-horses for his own use.

In his will, Girolamo would leave some of this property to the Company of St Ursula, so that they could enjoy it, in perpetuity, in return for the payment of an annual sum of money. And it was precisely to carry out this wish that they would all be faced with the need to nominate a legal representative, through whom the Company could carry out valid juridical acts. Thus we know that Girolamo must have died a little before 18 March 1537, the precise date of Angela's election as legal representative.<sup>10</sup>

The beginning of Girolamo's relationship with Angela can easily be linked to the friendship which existed between Angela and his aunt, Caterina Patengola. The young man could have been brought in quite naturally, in spite of the litigation separating his father and aunt.

During Angela's stay at Cremona under the protection of Agostino Gallo, we will find Girolamo also there; we will meet him at the bed-side of Angela when she is seriously ill, both of them protagonists in a scene

<sup>0</sup> D6.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> PE, n.225: "... io non possedo niente, ma tutto possede dona Caterina da Zono, dona fo de ditto domino Zoan Baptista".

which has all the flavour of the Franciscan "Little Flowers".11

Among Angela's close friends, he was the first, and for many years the only one who was directly involved in the Hospital for Incurables. On 2 May 1521, there was a meeting for the Consortium of subscribers for this hospital, already established "de jure" but still non-existent "de facto". Besides the civil authorities appointed for this "luogo pio", 203 subscribers were present. The purpose of the meeting was to elect, among the subscribers, 125 "confratres" who would form a General Council of the Hospital. There was a clause forbidding the choice of more than two people from the same family or with the same surname, and this inevitably restricted the choice.

Some of the most important names of the Brescian nobility featured on this list; many of them appear also in the minutes of the Major Hospital and in the decisions of the General Council of the Commune. Girolamo Patengola was the one hundred and twenty second on the list.<sup>13</sup> He was to become a member of the reduced Council on 5 May 1532.<sup>14</sup>

Given the number of "confratres" who made up these bodies, it is difficult to see in Girolamo the "co-founder" of the hospital, as one could be led to believe by a certain satire addressed to him by a friend in 1529, while he was living at Cremona: "convenite Hieronymum Patenglum – latentem dubii timore belli – urbe, si superis placet, Cremona". In verse, the author, Giovanni Vincenzo Canti from Manerbio, was reproaching that "scatterbrain" Girolamo with wanting to segregate the "incurables" in an "ignominious, miserable, small" hospital ("perignobile, egenum, pusillum"), thus threatening to dismember that very "Ospedal Grande" which was the pride of Brescia. Considered in their context, these verses are a light-hearted satire of the collaboration Girolamo was giving to the erection of the hospital which was still in progress.

Girolamo has left us only one piece of written evidence concerning Angela Merici directly: the rhymed octave which he was hoping to place on her tomb and which he had read to her when she was dying; but when she heard the epitaph being read, contrary to all expectations, she was healed. The strophe, never made use of, has come down to us through the sworn testimony of Agostino Gallo at the "Processo Nazari". 16

<sup>11</sup> Cf. infra, Pt.II, Ch.VI, 1.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> For the meaning of this word and its implications, cf. infra, Pt.II, Ch.V, Appendix Note, c. <sup>13</sup> ASB, *Libro Primo delli Consigli Generali dal 1521 al 1661*, Ospedale Incurabili, ff.5r-6v.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., minutes 15 May 1532, f.17v.

<sup>15</sup> This satire is reported in GUERRINI, La Compagnia, in S. Angela, op. cit., pp.114-115.

### c) Giovan Antonio Romano

Certainly closer to Angela than Girolamo, Giovan Antonio Romano was a "varotaro di Ghedi nato circa il 1494", as is indicated on a note attached to the cover of one of his "polizze d'estimo".<sup>17</sup>

Merician historiographers generally call him "Antonio", but Gallo, in his deposition at the "Processo Nazari", speaks of him as "messer Gio. Antonio Romano mercante" and the "polizze" leave no doubt: "Zua An-

tonio" in 1534, "Gio. Antonio" in 1548, "Jo. Ant.º" in 1568.

In 1517, the year for the declaration of patrimonial goods, Romano does not appear to have presented any. He could have been dispensed from doing so if he still had no settled residence in the town. There is a whole wealth of information, though, in the 1534, 1548, 1565 and 1568 declarations. Rather surprisingly, Antonio's age is only given approximately: in 1534 he states that he is forty years old; he makes it sixty in 1548, and eighty-two in 1568, thus making his date of birth fluctuate between 1494, 1488 and 1486. His 1565 declaration does not give any information about family dates, but just a long list of the properties he owned.

We do not know which document had provided the annotator of the note on the cover with the date 1494 as the year of birth of the "varotaro di Ghedi".

At any rate, when Antonio Romano, Battista's son, became acquainted with Angela during his frequent visits to the Patengola house (perhaps he had been a friend of Costanzo and Gandolfo), he was a young, unmarried man of about twenty-three. He may have come alone to Brescia; evidently he must have enjoyed a certain freedom of action as it was he who invited Angela to move to his house, because of his affection for her, as he put it very simply at the "Processo Nazari". 18

Angela was then more than forty; she bore the official title of "Suor" – or rather "Sur" – as was usual with the Franciscan tertiaries. This title, her homespun habit and her white veil, these were the earliest memory that Romano preserved about his first meetings with Angela in the house of Dame Caterina.

Romano did not say anything about why and how he had succeeded in persuading Angela to accept his hospitality, and under what conditions. By going to stay in his house, Angela was perhaps carrying out some mission dimly discerned at the period of her meetings with him.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> PE, n.115. "Varotaro" from "varus" (squirrel), a furrier? In his 1568 PE, Romano declares: "esercitamo la mercantia de panni et sarze" (cloth-merchant).
<sup>18</sup> D16.

According to Romano's statement, Angela had stayed in his house in the Sant'Agata district "about fourteen years". From her own lips he had collected together her memories of her childhood, and the story of the apparition of her sister, triumphant in the beatitude of heaven, that vision which had acted as an incentive to the life of austerity and of prayer she had already undertaken.<sup>19</sup> Antonio would also be Angela's

companion to the Holy Land.

After the interlude at Cremona in 1529, Angela would not return to Romano's house. Very likely her mission there was completed. The declaration for 1534 tells us that Antonio has married a certain Francesca; they have a little boy who is called Paolo; a niece aged ten years, Catalina, is living with them, and they have three servants working in the house, two men and one woman. The family unit must have been formed only a few years previously. Angela may have withdrawn elsewhere out of discretion, leaving the married couple free to organise their own family life and to see to the running of the house.

In 1548, the couple have four children: Laurenzo aged ten years, Olivero aged five, Appolonario aged four, and Maria who is nine. As was the custom, Maria's name comes after the boys, even though she is

older. There is no further mention of Paolo.

As one can see, the "polizze d'estimo" are an interesting mine of general information, a mirror in which are reflected the usages and customs of the period, and also a witness to the evolution of names. Zua Antonio becomes first of all Gio. Antonio darumano, and ends up being Jo. Antonio de Rumani, "citizen and merchant living in Brescia". His son Appolonario in the 1548 declaration is called Apolonio in the 1568 one, and Laurenzo has become Lorenzo. Only Lorenzo is married, and his little girl of nineteen months has a Christian name which is both a memory and a tribute of veneration: Angela.

In that same year 1568, when interrogated by the notary Nazari, Antonio Romano, now eighty-two years old according to his own statement (seventy-four according to the note on the cover), revives his memories of the past. The language he uses certainly betrays his lack of culture, but it also shows how alive these memories were, all crowding together in his enthusiasm and haste to speak; and then he concludes

with the words: "and I do not remember anything else".

### d) Agostino Gallo

In 1529, when the threat of the imperial army was still hanging over Brescia, Angela took refuge at Cremona in the house of Agostino Gallo. Her stay there would be quite a short one, but eventful. On her return to Brescia, she would continue to enjoy Gallo's hospitality, at least for a few more months.

Agostino Gallo was born in 1499,<sup>20</sup> the son of Giovanni Cristoforo, a well-to-do cloth-merchant, and of Beatrice. Married to Cecilia Campanari,<sup>21</sup> he had four daughters and then a son, as is seen from the baptismal registers of San Clemente between 1532 and 1543. He had given the names of Angela Aurelia Ippolita to his fourth daughter, born 28 September 1539. His son, Mario, born in 1534, is still inscribed in his father's declaration of 1568.<sup>22</sup>

A member of the Academy of the Occult, under the name of "Incognito", Agostino had as his emblem a plough turning over the soil and extracting treasures from it, with the motto: "Veteres tellure recludit". A great lover of country life, he later retired from his business to devote himself to the praise of this way of life, composing the work: "Le dieci giornate della vera agricoltura, e piaceri della Villa", in dialogo. In Brescia, appresso Gio. Battista Bozzola. MDLXIIII".

A man of great sincerity, in his book he conjures up, with an innocent, tranquil enthusiasm, the advantages and joys of rural life. Reprints of the book followed on each other, the title changing to "thirteen days", and then to "twenty". It would even be translated into French.<sup>24</sup> The success of the work, though, was due, not so much to its intrinsic merit, as to the general deep-seated desire for a return to agricultural activities in contrast to those of war.

Agostino Gallo had met Angela a number of times, but he had got to know her principally through his sister, Ippolita. Left a widow by the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> GIOVAN MARIA MAZZUCHELLI, Notigie intorno alla vita ed agli scritti di Agostino Gallo nobile bresciano estratte dalla "Serie degli Scrittore d'Italia" del Conte Giammaria Mazzuchelli nobile bresciano, B.Vat. Fondo Vaticano Latino, 9283-XCII.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Cecilia, Giambattista Tarello's daughter, had two brothers, Agostino and Ercole, who were bell-founders; hence their surname of "campanari" (bell-ringers) (according to some unpublished notes of Paolo Guerrini in the BQ).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> PE, n.197. Here Agostino states that he is 70, Cecilia 68 and Mario 25.

<sup>23</sup> MAZZUCHELLI, Notizie, op. cit., f.6r.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> A. GALLO, Secrets de la vraye agriculture, et honestes plaisirs qu'on reçoit en la mesnagerie des champs... divisez en XX iournées, par Dialogues..., Paris, N. Chesneau, 1572. The Biblioteca Queriniana possesses the 1622 copy of it. Cit. in Francesco Grasso Caprioli, Camillo Tarello, Agostino Gallo, Giacomo Chizzola e l'Accademia di Rezzato, in "Rivista di Storia dell'Agricoltura", 2 dic. 1982, p.64.

merchant Dorosini in 1528 and childless,<sup>25</sup> the latter had turned to the Franciscan tertiary to assuage her sorrow.

Later on, Agostino, together with his sister, would accompany Angela on her pilgrimage to Varallo.<sup>26</sup> In 1568, he was to participate in the interrogation conducted by the notary Giovan Battista Nazari in preparation for the first biography of Angela Merici, and would prove himself to be the most clear-headed and the most analytical of the witnesses.<sup>27</sup>

### e) Giacomo Chizzola

A first precision must be made concerning the Christian name: it is Giacomo and not Gian Giacomo, as was written by Rossi,<sup>28</sup> and repeated by recent authors, thereby giving rise to a certain confusion between two distinct people, Giovanni Chizzola and Giacomo Chizzola. We did not succeed in discovering how they were related to each other. Even the family-tree, patiently drawn up by going back through the centuries, and from which Baron Lothar Chizzola of Vienna kindly put a section at our disposal, shows some hesitation in this area and does not help to bring out the precise relationship between the two men.

Antonio Cistellini, for example, makes the two Brescian noblemen one person, G. Giacomo, "gentleman and doctor, born in 1488, son of the nobleman Lodovico", 29 and goes on to describe his brilliant public and diplomatic career. He adds that Gian Giacomo was attracted to the religious circle of Angela "whose spiritual son he was" and puts his name down among the first collaborators of the Hospital for Incurables. In reality, the councillor Chizzola who took part in the setting-up of the "luogo pio" was Giovanni, also a member of the General Council of the Commune of Brescia. At that time, namely 1521, Giacomo was a young man of about eighteen or nineteen.

As for calling himself "the spiritual son" of Angela, this is an assertion that we did not find anywhere, and therefore it is not a title we can apply to either Giacomo or to Giovanni. The only thing we know, as we shall see, is that Giacomo was protector of the Company of St Ursula.

We were able to find two "polizze d'estimo", those of 1548 and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Unpublished notes of Paolo Guerrini in the BQ.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> Cf. infra, Pt.II, Ch.V, 5.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> D16.

OTTAVIO ROSSI, Elogi Historici di Bresciani Illustri, Brescia, Bartolomeo Fontana, 1620, pp.373-378.
 CISTELLINI, Figure, op. cit., pp.83-84, n.49 and p.21.

1568,<sup>30</sup> which refer to Giacomo Chizzola, son of the late Lodovico. In the first one he states that he is 45 years old, and in the second, 66 years (he must have been born, therefore, between 1502-1503, while Giovanni, according to his 1548 PE and to the Chizzola genealogical-table, would have been born between 1476 and 1478).

Giacomo does not give the name of his wife, who must have been about ten years younger. In 1548, they had five sons and two daughters: Lodovico – aged 14 years, Aurelia – 12, Paolo – 11, Augustino – 9,

Hieronimo -7, Camilla -5, and Gio. Battista -2.

In the 1568 statement, the family consists of "six male children excluding the friar" ("sei figlioli maschi senza il frate"); Aurelia and Camilla have disappeared, but Camillo, aged 12 years and Faustino, aged 15, have appeared on the scene. Gio. Battista is missing, so perhaps he is the "frate" who by then had left the family.

Both the above-mentioned family-tree and Cistellini make a Vittoria Gavazzi the wife of Giacomo Chizzola. Indeed Cistellini further adds that she was his second wife, and that her son, Nicola, married a Stella, who was very likely related to Bartolomeo, the founder of the Hospital for Incurables. As a matter of fact, none of Giacomo's sons is called Nicola, so this piece of information is inexact.

The Enciclopedia Bresciana,<sup>31</sup> which distinguishes the two Chizzolas in two separate articles, assumes that Giacomo's wife was called Caterina, and that, remaining a widow, she had entered the Company of St Ursula and would govern it as general from 1580-1583. It is true, indeed, that a Caterina Chizzola was superior general of the Company,<sup>32</sup> but it is difficult to see on what grounds the Enciclopedia Bresciana makes its inference, especially as in the same article it records a mission carried out by Giacomo, in 1588, to protect the rights of Brescia over the waters of the River Oglio. In 1580, therefore, his wife could not have been either a widow or a superior.

However, we know something about another Caterina Chizzola, who in 1534 was the widow of the doctor of law Giovan Antonio Chizzola and the mother of a Giovan Battista. Although the boy was only fourteen years old, it was he who had filled in the declaration-form in his own name, and had also given information about the properties belong-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> PE, for both Giacomo and Giovanni, at n.183 for 1548; Giovanni's PE for 1534 and Giacomo's PE for 1568 at n.39.

Enciclopedia Bresciana, Ediz. La Voce del Popolo, Brescia 1975, art. "Chizzola", vol.2, p.215.
 ASB, Fondo di Religione, Secondo Libro Generale, list without any date, f.40; election of 14 August 1580, ASB, Fondo Notarile, notaio Antonio Piazza, file 2596, and Secondo Libro Generale, f.56v.

ing to his mother, Caterina, then aged 36 years.33

By 1548, this Giovan Battista had already died, and so Caterina was left in possession of the goods that had belonged to her husband, Giovan Antonio, and to her son, Giovan Battista.<sup>34</sup> This Caterina could well have been the future mother general of the Company.

Bartolomeo Palazzo relates in his *Diario* that Zanantonio Chizzola had died 14 September 1532; <sup>35</sup> that in 1538 Caterina had sold him, Bartolomeo, a horse for 20 scudi; <sup>36</sup> and that in 1540, Caterina's son had died at Padua.<sup>37</sup>

But the date indicated in Palazzo's diary for the death of the husband is probably wrong, because Giovan Antonio Chizzola, who had been elected director of the Hospital for Incurables at the meeting held on 20 May 1530, appears to have died already by 15 May 1532. On that date, in fact, the minutes for the council-meeting of the Hospital record the following decision: "Et in primis posita fuit pars quod spectabilis dominus Camillus Butius sindicus confirmetur, unus autem elligatur loco quondam spectabilis domini Joannis Antonii Chizzolae olim sindici".38

Would this Giovan Antonio be the same as the one whom the Chizzola family-tree identifies as the son of Pietro fu Francesco, born in 1490?

Giacomo Chizzola had been elected, for a period of time, protector of the Company of St Ursula. Now, the minutes of the Council of the Company, dated 31 December 1581, report the election of "four protectors, the previous ones having died". Does this mean that Giacomo Chizzola had already died? How then can one justify the information given by Pasero, according to which "Again in 1588 Chizzola defended the rights of Brescia at Venice, presenting the required documents from 1037 to our own day"?

This diplomatic mission of Giacomo to Venice in 1588 no doubt marked the end of a period of intense activity in the service of the city of Brescia, conducted by means of frequent embassies even to the Emperor, 40 and there is evidence of these embassies in the private Chronicles of

<sup>33</sup> PE, n.183.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> BARTOLOMEO PALAZZO, Diario in GUERRINI, Cronache, op. cit., p.346.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p.360.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p.365.

<sup>38</sup> Libro Primo delli Consigli Generali, cit., ff.16r and 17v.

<sup>39</sup> ASB. Fondo di Religione, Secondo Libro Generale, f.162v.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>40</sup> CARLO PASERO, Il dominio veneto fino all'incendio della Loggia (1426-1575), in Storia di Brescia, op. cit., II, pp.383-384.

the period.41 All this activity, however, did not always spare him from

accusations and disputes.

For example, in 1546, there were circulating in the city "nonnulli libelli famosi, contra spectatissimum virum D. Jacobum Chizolam", accusing him of partiality in his political activity. These defamatory pamphlets were even sent to the imperial court, and the affair had repercussions within the General Council of the City. The one who explained the matter to the Council vehemently defended the cause of this man "qui obedientia et amore patrio ductus, posthabita tota eius familia, neglectis omnibus rebus suis, alicui incommodo labori damno vel periculo non pepercit...".<sup>42</sup> This defence, in praise of Giacomo's civic virtues, had been so impassioned that it was followed by a decision to charge the Brescian Orators at Venice to undertake his defence before the Council of Ten.

Bartolomeo Palazzo, in his chronicle, also mentions the appearance of these pamphlets: "Today 9[July 1546] certain pamphlets have been circulating directed against messer Iacomo Chizola, who had gone to the Emperor to plead the cause of the River Olio". And Pasero tates that the authors were not discovered despite a big reward promised by the authorities. The "affair of the River Olio" was a legal dispute between Brescia, subject to the Serenissima, and Cremona, bound to the Emperor, over the possession of the waters of the river Oglio.

The activity of Giacomo Chizzola was not only juridical and diplomatic. If, as we have established, he is not the Chizzola who features on the list of the first councillors of the Hospital for Incurables, <sup>45</sup> he is mentioned by name in the register of this "luogo pio" on 3 January 1535, when he was elected "guardian" to replace the late Scipione Provaglio. On the same day, Agostino Gallo was elected "massaro", in other words, treasurer. <sup>46</sup>

Chizzola would also establish in Brescia, Rezzato and other places, some "academies", a kind of boarding-school for boys. Knowing that Cardinal Reginald Pole was particularly interested in the one at Rezzato, he would send him a long account of the way it was run, using as his

<sup>42</sup> ASC. Provvisioni n.358, from 5-1-1545 to 24-12-1546. Minutes of 18-7-1546, ff.208v-209v.

44 PASERO, Il dominio, op. cit., p.384, n.1.

46 Ibid., ff.19v-20r.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup> Cronache di Tomaso Mercanda (1532-1546) and Le Cronache Bresciane inedite dei sec. XV-XIX, trascritte e annotate da Paolo Guerrini, Brescia 1925, I, p.157.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup> BARTOLOMEO PALAZZO, *Diario, op. cit.*, p.379: "Adi 9 fonno messi certi cartelli fora in biasmo de messer Iacomo Chizola qual era andato da lo Imperatore per la causa de Olio". On page 384 it says that Giacomo's house was opposite St Afra.

<sup>45</sup> ASB, Libro Primo delli Consigli Generali, cit., ff.5r-6v.

intermediary Bartolomeo Stella, who at that time was in the service of the English prelate.<sup>47</sup>

We cannot say when Chizzola came into contact with Angela Merici and the Company of St Ursula; we only know that in the minutes of the election of the protectors, which took place on 11 November 1573, he is the only one left out of the four protectors previously elected, 48 and that he would continue in office for some time to come. His son, Agostino, was to replace him on 31 December 1581.49 We do not know the date when he was first elected.

Giacomo was not yet thirty-eight when the Foundress died, and he had been married less than ten years (judging from the age of his children). Would he, in spite of this, have fulfilled the condition laid down by Angela that the protectors should be chosen among "mature men"? <sup>50</sup> But in 1568 he was already a protector of the Company, and had probably been so for some years. He was only sixty-six years old and was still in full possession of his intellectual faculties, as he would be able to continue in his career, it seems, for another twenty years. It was the period of the "Processo Nazari", to which he was called to give evidence. His eldest son, Doctor Lodovico, gave evidence in his favour.

In Giacomo's deposition there is no allusion to memories which Angela might have told him in person about her childhood and youth; nor is there any personal reference to what he might have witnessed himself about her life of penance. Regarding all this, he has "heard it said by trustworthy people". It seems that he himself, though, had noticed Angela's extraordinary gift of penetrating the Holy Scriptures, her understanding of Latin, her facility of speech. When the "Madre" was on the point of dying, he caught her last words of instruction addressed to Tomaso Gavardo, who had accompanied him on his visit: "Do during this life what you would like to have done at the time of death". <sup>51</sup> "And I remember nothing else", concludes Chizzola, who does not recall any other event or activity of Angela.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup> Cf. Biblioteca Civica di Bergamo, Archivio Silvestri, Carte Stella, scat.40, n.75. This subject is at present the theme of a study by Prof. Gian Ludovico Masetti Zannini.

<sup>48</sup> ASB, Secondo Libro Generale, f.155r.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., f.162v.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>50</sup> Regola, Ch.XII, Government, D2.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>51</sup> D16.

# f) Gabriele Cozzano

The witnesses presented so far had seen Angela living for some time under their roof, or they had been brought into touch with her in different circumstances, or again, through their frequent contacts with the members of the Company, they had learnt details about Angela and her teachings, all of which had made her even more familiar to them. Angela had sometimes shared her own memories with them, or with them had lived through some experience. But it was to someone else that she had reserved her most delicate confidences, informing him about her plan to found a spiritual family, and entrusting him with putting together, under her dictation, her deepest, most intimate message: the Rule for the virgins of the Company of St Ursula, the Counsels for the "colonelle" (or district-superiors), the Legacies for the noble lady-governors of the Company itself. This man was Gabriele Cozzano.

Guerrini and Cistellini call him Don Gabriele and say he was a priest, as Peroni had done already, and as other authors would do after them. But in fact he was not. In all the documents where he appears, his name is preceded by the simple "D": Dominus; but never by the abbreviation of "Reverendus Dominus", which we usually found for priests. An example of this, among others, is the page from Nazari's Vita in which he records the four epitaphs for the tomb of Angela Merici; the authors of these are described in the following terms: "Rev.di D. Valeriani Bergom. Canonici Regularis", "Eiusdem", "Cuiusdam de Zanettis legis doctoris", "D. Gabrielis Cozzani litterarum professoris". This page can be read in D17.

Another convincing example is to be found in the notarial deed of a legacy that Lucrezia Lodrone left to the Company 25 April 1538, a deed copied in the APC from the ancient Registro de tutti li Instrumenti. The customary concluding formula says: "... rogavit me Bernadinum Gros-

GUERRINI, "Il testo primitivo della Regola", in S. Angela, op. cit., p.89, n.1. CISTELLINI, Figure, op. cit., p.198, n.1. In the page devoted to St Angela in La vita religiosa nei secoli XV e XVI from the Storia di Brescia already cited, pp.456-457, Cistellini calls him "don Gabriele Cozzando". VINCENZO PERONI, Biblioteca Bresciana, I, p.301, quoted by GUERRINI, supra, n.34. Thus, for example, PHILIP CARAMAN, St Angela. The Life of Angela Merici Foundress of the Ursulines, 1474-1540, Longmans, 1963. An Italian translation of it has been made: Sant' Angela Merici. Vita della fondatrice della Compagnia di S. Orsola e delle Orsoline (1474-1540), Morcelliana, 1965. It is not a work which we are going to take into consideration, as the author has shown no critical sense. We have to say the same about the work of LUIGI RINALDINI, Edizione anastatica della Regola della Compagnia di S. Orsola di Brescia istituta da S. Angela Merici nel 1535, approvata da S. Carlo nel 1581, con apparato critico e riferimento a tutti i testi precedenti e alle edizioni bresciane fino a oggi. Ateneo di Brescia, 1970. But we will be returning to this work further on, as some points need to be clarified; we are mentioning it here because of its inaccuracies about Gabriele Cozzano. As for T. LEDÓCHOWSKA, she favours the view that he was a lay-man (Angela, op. cit., I, p.99).

sum clericum Brixiae decretorum doctorem ac notarium ut publicum de premissis conficiam instrumentum una cum domino Gabriele Cozalo infrascripto, qui se subscribet pro secundo notario ad laudem sapientis".<sup>53</sup>

A few years later, the notary Girolamo Zanetti, at the request of the "Giudice del Malefizio",<sup>54</sup> produced a copy of the deed in question, writing as follows: "Ego Hieronymus Zanettus... suprascriptum instrumentum rogatum per quondam reverendum dominum Bernardinum Grossium [sic] una cum suprascripto domino Gabrielo Cozalo ex eiusdem originali de verbo ad verbum extrahi feci... ideo auscultato, in premissorum fidem signo et attestatione solitis subscripsi".<sup>55</sup>

This statement is undated, but it goes back to the period when the priest Bernardino Grossi was dead, and while Gabriele Cozzano, layman, was still alive.<sup>56</sup>

The variations in the spelling of Cozzano's surname may have made it difficult to identify him: de Cocialibus (D28), Cozalus (notarial deed of 30 November 1555), Cocianus (D29), Cozzano.

We searched in vain for his patrimonial statement; on the other hand, a "grammatico", and "litterarum professor" as was written in the epitaph on Angela's tomb,<sup>57</sup> he could have been exempt from any charge and tax-contribution, providing he did not exercise any other profession.

The Statutes of 1474,<sup>58</sup> in fact, say: "Capo 209. De immunitate medicorum et magistrorum gramaticae. Omnes et singuli magistri gramaticae et eorum familiae, videlicet patres, uxores et descendentes ex dictis magistris viventibus in arte magisterii praedicti, nunc et in futurum in civitate Brixiae vel districtu, absque aliqua arte exercentibus, intelligantur et sint auctoritate praesentis statuti perpetuo immunes ab omnibus et singulis oneribus realibus, personalibus et mixtis, quocumque nomine censeantur".

It was precisely when we were leafing through the tax-returns contained in the big file n.45 that we came across the one belonging to a certain Giacomo della Costa. Also a "maestro", he was presenting his declaration out of obedience, although knowing that he was under no obliga-

<sup>53</sup> APC. Vat. 341, f.926r.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>54</sup> Investigating magistrate of the court ... He presided over the criminal proceedings. (Cf. GUER-RINI, Cronache bresciane inedite, op. cit., I, n. p.133).

<sup>55</sup> APC. Vat. 341, f.926v.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>56</sup> The fact that the "Giudice del Malefizio" asked for an authenticated copy is a proof of the legal actions brought at the time of the Lodrone inheritance.

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>57</sup> Cf. The epitaph for the tomb in NAZARI, Vita. D17.
 <sup>58</sup> Leges Brixianae, Brescia, ed. Británnico 1498, "Statuta Civilia" in GUERRINI, Scuole e Maestri bresciani del '500. Lettura fatta all'Ateneo di Brescia nella seduta 8 maggio 1921 e integralmente pubblicata per unanime voto accademico nei Commentari dell'anno 1921, Brescia, 1922, p.77, n.1.

tion to do so: "1534. Ill. Jacopo de la Costa, professor of grammar, living in the district of Santa Maria de Carmeni, I present [my declaration] to the officers of this district out of obedience, without renouncing on this account my rights to exemption granted me by the Magnificent Corporation and by the Statutes which have exempted me according to Statute no. 209 realiter et personaliter". 58 bis

The absence of Gabriele Cozzano's declaration prevents us from knowing anything about his family and economic situation. He is called a notary in the notarial act (not executed by him) by which Lucrezia Lodrone settled a legacy in favour of the Company of St Ursula in 1538,<sup>59</sup> and also in the act of 30 November 1555 <sup>60</sup> which drew up the terms of some of the Company's credits. But no notarial file has been

found in his name, or any deed drawn up by him in person.

Angela's personal secretary, chancellor of the Company, Cozzano remained linked to it at least until September 1556. We were able to prove this from some notarial deeds to be found at the Archivio di Stato of Brescia. We have just referred to the act of 30 November 1555. In the act of 23 November in the same year, when Ginevra Luzzago is "generalis gubernatrix administratrix", Gabriele Cozzano and Giulio Balteo, notaries, are elected procurators of the Company of St Ursula, agents, petitioners and defenders, "patres ad occurrentes necessitates".61

On 18 September 1556, that section of the Company of which Ginevra Luzzago is "universalis gubernatrix et mater", elects as their legal representative "dominum Gabrielem Cocianum, gramaticum, civem et habitatorem Brixiae, olim a reverenda domina Angela, institutrice seu fundatrice dicte Societatis..., sibi delectum scribam suorum omnium institutorum, ac bonarum admonitionum; ac praeterea gubernatorem, et tamquam patrem ipsius Confraternitatis, in primis sectantes ipsius fundatricis voluntatem".62

In 1559, by which time Ginevra Luzzago has died, and Bianca Porcellaga is the mother general of the reunited Company, 63 Cozzano's name no longer appears among the agents and protectors of the Company. No doubt he also had died.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>58bis</sup> "1534. Ill. Jacopo de la Costa, professor di grammatica, habitador in contrada Santa Maria de Carmeni ala qual produgo per obidientia sine preiudicio de li rason mie per la immunità concessa per la Magnifica Comunità et Statutti quali me hanno fatto immune in Statutto n. 209 realiter et personaliter"

<sup>59</sup> APC. Vat. 341, ff.924v-926v.

<sup>60</sup> ASB, Fondo Notarile, In solutum datio..., notaio Girolamo Zanetti, file 1694.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>61</sup> This is the formula, in the Italian language, used by Angela in the Regola in the chapter on government. Cf. D28.

<sup>62</sup> D29. Cf. infra, Pt.III, Ch.II, 2.b.

<sup>63</sup> D33.

The relationship between Angela Merici and Cozzano was certainly much more than that of author and scribe. He says so himself on several occasions: Angela "made him the chancellor to write the Rule and everything pertaining to it, and she asked him to write many other things; and she made him protector of this Company for him to defend it especially from evil doctrines and opinions, and to demonstrate to it the truth of her doctrine". And he adds, with a certain conscious pride and boastfulness: "another such chancellor could not have been found, because noone could have understood the Foundress' mind as I did". Doneda had called him "a jurist by profession", and there is no doubt that, having studied law, Cozzano had put his legal expertise at the service of the Company with vigour and generosity, as is revealed by his writings.

## g) Isabetta Prato

The evidence of Isabetta Prato's relationship with Angela Merici goes back to about the 1530's, since the frescoes of the room which she put at the disposal of the new-born Company were dated 1533. By that time Isabetta was probably already a widow and free to dispose of her own patrimony.

But who was Isabetta Prato?

In 1517, in his "polizza d'estimo", "Jo. Paulo da Prato in secunda Sancti Joannis" declared "donna Isabetta sua consorte de età de anni n. 21". In 1534 Giovan Paolo was already dead, and the PE was drawn up by his widow "domina Isabetta uxor quondam domini Joannis de Pratho, anni 38". 67 Neither of these two declarations makes any reference to Isabetta's maiden name.

The discovery of a pontifical document (of which more will be said later) suddenly suggested to us to check the surname Prato with that of Bargnani. Following this track, we found in the 1517 PE of "Vincenzo da Bargnano in Cittadella Vecchia a la piazza del Novarino", 68 the entry of an "Isabetta mia filiola da marito", without any indication of age.

Two later "polizze" throw light on the situation:

1548: "madona Isabetta di Bargnani et consorte del quondam domino Zoan Paulo da Prato in Citadella nova, anni 45" (PE, n.12 and n.164);

65 DONEDA, Vita, op. cit., p.80.

<sup>67</sup> PE, n.110 and n.231.

68 PE, n.164.

<sup>64</sup> COZZANO, Dichiarazione. D24, [f.979v].

<sup>66</sup> Cf. infra, Pt.III, Ch.I and Ch.II, passim.

1568: "madonna Isabetta di Bargnani consorte del quondam messer Giovan Paulo di Prati, anni 66" (PE, n.164).

The apparent contradiction between the two PE of 1517 now explains itself; they were both, in fact, declaring the same person, Isabetta Bargnani who, in the course of the year, had married Giovan Paolo da Prato.

There is a discrepancy of almost six years in the ages given in the various declarations, making her date of birth vary between 1496-1497 and 1502-1503, according to whether she filled in the form under the name of Prato or that of Bargnani.

At first one could easily have thought that two separate people were involved here. But the adjacent properties of a certain estate "alle Chiusure sopra S. Bartolomeo" (belonging to "Hieronimo Feroldo fisico e Alovisio fu Agostino Campolo) and other constants <sup>69</sup> which are found in both the 1534 "polizza" of Isabetta Prato and the 1548 and 1568 "polizze" of Isabetta Bargnani, rule out any hypothesis about someone else with the same name.

Isabetta belonged to a family owning extensive, rich-yielding lands; she entered the Prato family, the members of which, according to Pandolfo Nassino, were "parolari", that is, coppersmiths.<sup>70</sup> We also found at Salò, in the catastico of 1524, some "Heredes magistri Augustini da Prato parolarii".<sup>71</sup>

Giovan Paolo (or Gian Paolo), Isabetta's husband, also had some profitable properties, for example, at Coccaglio – with about 23 hectares <sup>72</sup> and containing a good vineyard – and at the Chiusure near S. Bartolomeo – with another 7 hectares of arable land. The wind-mill in this last-mentioned place, however, had suffered damages: "It is now ruined by the wars and brings me in nothing". <sup>73</sup> Taken as a whole, though, the situation here was economically very sound.

According to the information given by Pandolfo Nassino, Gian Paolo's two brothers were Gian Andrea and Gian Francesco. One of their sisters had married a certain Julio Cizola <sup>74</sup> – would he be the Giulio Chizzola who features in the Chizzola genealogical tree as being born

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>69</sup> As, for example, the existence of leases with the Asti, the Luzzago, the Fisogno, the Bargnano families; these are to be found in the declarations of 1534, 1548 and 1568; as also the property at Coccaglio mentioned in 1517, 1534 and 1548 and the one which is situated in the mountains on the island of Lake Iseo, in 1534 and 1548.

<sup>70</sup> NASSINO, Registro, op. cit., p.719.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>71</sup> AACS, reg.n.200, Extimus MDXXIIII, f.45v.

<sup>72</sup> PE, n.231, year 1517.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., "al presente è ruinato per le guerre et non ne cavo niente".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>74</sup> Ibid., Gian Paolo still had to pay 800 lire to his brother-in-law to complete the dowry.

in 1489? 75 Gian Francesco had had two daughters, both married, one with a Zanetti and the other with a Fenaroli.76

The names of the two brothers, Gian Andrea and Gian Francesco, appear frequently in the lists of the General Council of the Major Hospital of Brescia. Later, though, Gian Andrea was imprisoned on 26 November 1530, and then banished, for minting counterfeit money.<sup>77</sup>

In her 1534 tax-return, made in her own name, Isabetta Prato,<sup>78</sup> now a widow, states that she has a house for her own use in Brescia, in the piazza of the Cathedral. She paid the Canons of the Cathedral a rent of one lira planeta and 10 soldi for the rent of the garden. We found the record of this payment in a register of the Archivio Capitolare of Brescia.<sup>79</sup>

We do not know when the Prato couple, or perhaps Isabetta when she was a widow, moved to this residence which is not mentioned in the 1517 "polizza". In any case, the site of the house "sula piaza del Dom" is important. On account of its central position, Isabetta offered Angela a meeting-place there for her first followers, in a large room which has passed into Merician historiography under the name of the "Oratory of Isabetta Prato".

Carlo Doneda collected together some information and recollections about this from his contemporaries: The oratory "lies, as I have said, in the Cathedral square, inside a house, the door of which stands opposite a public building called the Munizion del Principe. It is bounded on the west by the stout walls of the very ancient, original fortifications of the City, and these form the wall of that side of the building. Faino has written that the oratory was situated on top of the old embankments of the City itself, and what he said is true. But the house passed from the hands of the above-named Giambatista Bianchi, into the possession of the Chiodi family, and they had the embankment taken down, and all the soil removed; thus it was underneath the said oratory that a room was built on the ground floor; on the south side of this same room there remains a small courtyard, from which one can reach the aforesaid room, namely the oratory, by climbing a small flight of steps. I was told these things by some very old people who know the place well ... It seems, moreover, that to bring the same oratory back into purely secular use, it had to be shortened on the north side ... At present it is about 14 feet

<sup>75</sup> Genealogical table cited., ms.

<sup>76</sup> NASSINO, Registro, op. cit., p.719.

<sup>77</sup> PASERO, Il dominio veneto, op. cit., p.319.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>78</sup> PE, n.110 and n.231.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>79</sup> AC, B.56, f.13v.

wide from east to west, and 16 feet long".80

Paolo Guerrini adds some further topographical information about the Prato house, referring to what Brescia was like before the Second World War: "This house is situated opposite the old Cathedral ("Duomo Vecchio"); its present boundaries are 2, Via Trieste; 13, piazza del Duomo; 1, Via XI Febbraio and 13, Via X Giornate. It belongs to the shopkeepers Oliveri and Manzoni. The entrance used to be at the top of a large flight of steps leading from the Cathedral square. It was protected by three iron gates surmounted by a hanging garden, which disappeared not more than fifty years ago when the building underwent its last transformation. Climbing this flight of steps, one reached the embankment of the old Roman walls; on the right was the entrance to the cannon foundry, or Venetian Arsenal, while opposite, on the left, was the building we have been talking about". In a note Guerrini adds: "There used to be some houses there belonging to the Canons of the Cathedral, that is, a part of the ancient cloister of the presbytery which used to occupy all the area comprised today between the top of Via Trieste, the big archway of the bishop's house, the small Paganora square and the Grand Theatre. The Canons had their houses on this vast area, together with the stables for their horses, their vegetable-gardens and even some stationes, or shops, which they used to hire out to traders".81

It was in this house in the Cathedral square that Isabetta Prato would get ready the oratory where Angela was to hold her meetings. She

<sup>80</sup> DONEDA, Vita, op. cit., pp.147-148: "Giace, come dissi, presso la piazza del Duomo dentro una casa, la cui porta sta dirimpetto ad una fabbrica pubblica, che si chiama la Munizion del Principe. Suo confine da sera sono le forti mura dell'antichissimo primo recinto della Città, le quali servono ad essa di parete da quella parte. Il Faino scrisse che l'oratorio era piantato sopra gli antichi terrapieni della Città medesima, e scrisse il vero. Ma entrata, dopo il sopranominato Giambatista Bianchi, al possesso della Casa la famiglia Chiodi, questa fece disfare il terrapieno, e condur via tutta la terra; onde sotto il detto oratorio fu fabbricata una stanza terranea, e a mezzodì del medesimo vi restò una corticella, dalla quale per mezzo di una breve scala si sale alla detta stanza o sia oratorio: le quali cose mi sono state narrate da persone molto attempate, e pratiche di quel sito... Sembra inoltre che l'oratorio medesimo, nel rimetterlo ad uso totalmente profano, sia stato raccorciato dalla parte di tramontana... Presentemente è largo da mattina a sera circa 8 braccia, e dieci lungo".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>81</sup> GUERRINI, La Compagnia, op. cit., pp.119-120: "Questa casa si trova di fronte al Duomo Vecchio; è ora limitata da via Trieste n. 2, piazza del Duomo n. 13, via XI Febbraio n. 1 e dai Portici di via X Giornate n. 13. Appartiene ai negozianti Oliveri e Manzoni, e aveva anticamente l'ingresso da uno scalone che saliva dalla piazza del Duomo, protetto da tre cancellate sormontate da un giardino pensile, scomparso da non oltre cinquant'anni nella trasformazione più recente subita dall'edificio. Salendo lo scalone e arrivati sul terrapieno delle antiche mura romane, a destra si trovava l'ingresso alla fonderia dei cannoni, o Arsenale veneto, a sinistra e di fronte si trovava l'edificio di cui parliamo". "Quivi erano anticamente alcune delle case dei canonici del Duomo, cioè una parte dell'antico chiostro della canonica, che occupava tutta l'area compresa ora fra l'inizio di via Trieste, il voltone del vescovato, la piazzetta di Paganora e il Teatro grande. Su questa vasta area i canonici avevano le case di abitazione, le stalle dei cavalli, le ortaglie e anche alcune stationes o botteghe, che si davano in affitto a mercanti".

herself, however, would not be among the five lady-governors of the Company who were elected on 18 March 1537. This may have been due to the fact that, at that particular time, Isabetta was still very busily en-

gaged in the field of apostolic relief works.

Two documents, already known moreover, make reference to Isabetta Prato's charitable work: the Annali del Ven.do Luogo Pio delle Convertite cioè della Carità, quali principiano dall'anno 1532 e continuano fino al 17...[sic] — we have already spoken about the sketchy basic historical documentation of these Annals 82 — and the "Vita di Laura Gambara" by Faino in his Brescia Beata, 83 where the name of "Elisabetta Prata" has been added in the margin. Laura Gambara and Isabetta Prato, therefore, would both have been involved in the work of gathering together penitent women and orphan-girls; they would unite them later in the "luogo pio" which would be called "della Carità". And it is to this "luogo pio" that Laura Gambara bequeathed her own house, in a will dated 1537, and she transferred there all those under her protection in 1538.

The Annals relate: "On the 10th day of March, in the year 1532 of our salvation, they began to gather together young orphan-girls to lodge them in the new Hospital of the Casa della Carità [in fact, this new hospice would not be ready for them until much later]; and they installed them in the house belonging to the nobleman Count Leonardo Martinengo, a house which was situated on the Mercato Nuovo, and which had been rented for that purpose; Lady Isabetta Prato and Lady Damisella di Rossi were put in charge of them. In the same way they began to gather in young penitent women, and on the 16th day of November, the orphans and women were taken from the above-named house and led to the house of messer Marc'Antonio Bombardiero, st situated above the piazza of the Duomo, and which had been rented by messer Gieronimo Pattengolo, the first treasurer at that time".

<sup>83</sup> FAINO, "Della Serva di Dio la contessa Laura Gambara fondatrice del pio luogo detto della Carità...", in *Brescia Beata*, BQ, ms.E.I.2. p.413.

<sup>84</sup> We found the "polizza" of a certain Antonio, fu mastro Giovanni Bombardieri; it belongs to the year 1534 and is classified in the folder PE n.22. Among the goods declared: "una casa in Broletto

per uso mio et fito".

<sup>82</sup> Cf. supra, Pt.I, Ch.I, 2.c.

Annali della Carità, cit., f.[2r]: "L'anno di nostra salute 1532, alli 10 di marzo, principiarono a raccogliere delle giovani orfane per locarle nell'Ospital nuovo della Casa della Carità [in realtà questo nuovo ospizio non sarebbe stato disponibile che molto più tardi], et furono messe nella casa del nobilhuomo conte Leonardo Martinengo, qual era situata sul Mercato Nuovo, presa ad affitto per quest'effetto; e furono poste al governo di esse madonna Isabetta da Prato e madonna Damisella di Rossi. Così pure si diede principio a raccogliere delle giovani peccatrici, ed alli 16 di novembre furono levate dalla sudetta casa le orfane e convertite, et furono condotte nella casa di messer Marc' Antonio Bombardiero sopra della piazza del Duomo, qual fu presa ad affitto da messer Gieronimo Pattengolo all'ora primo depositario".

In spite of a few errors, <sup>86</sup> this text provides us with some material from which we can get a rough idea of the social activity Isabetta Prato was engaged in at that particular time, and it also helps us to place this activity in some kind of local context.

And so, from March to November 1532, Isabetta would have been working together with Laura Gambara in gathering the penitent women (first priority for Laura in her work of charity) and some orphan-girls (probably in moral danger) in the house of Leonardo Martinengo; in November, all these would be transferred to the Bombardiero house.

Round about the same time, two events took place, very different in importance and in character: Laura Gambara had her house adapted so that she could accommodate those under her care, and in addition she took steps to see that a petition reached the Pope beseeching some spiritual favours for the newly-found work. The petition was signed as a whole by the "Reggitori dell'Ospedale degli Incurabili" and by two

Brescian petitioners: Laura Gambara and Elisabetta Bargnani.

The "luoghi pii" were subsidised by public charity and private alms and, as was the accepted custom, their councillors were chosen from among the best qualified citizens. But this work of the "Carità" seems to have come into being entirely through the initiative and at the expense of Laura Gambara, who would be in charge of it until 1549 87 when, before her death, she entrusted it to the Governors of the Hospital for Incurables. It is likely that, from the beginning, the latter had some moral responsibility since they also had signed the petition to the Pope. We gather this from the Bull discovered in the Register of Paul III's secret Bulls, and dated 3 August 1535.88 It had been asked for by the "dilecti fi-

<sup>87</sup> FAINO, "Della Serva di Dio" cit., in *Brescia Beata cit.*, f.415; Faino cites the epigraph inscribed in 1642 on the building: "Qui locum hunc a Charitate intueris – Laurae Gambarae comitissae – charitatem quae fundavit anno MDXXX cognosce – Civitatisque Providentiam – quae Hospitalis a Pietate Praesidibus – commendavit regimen MDXXXXIX praedica...". In 1548, the little orphans had already been transferred to the Ospedale Grande (*Libro Primo delli Consigli Generali cit.*, f.29v).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>86</sup> The rescue-work of the penitent women began in 1530; it was the work of Laura Gambara, widow of Count Marc'Antonio Secco d'Aragona (*Annali*. f.[1r]; FAINO, "Della Serva di Dio" cit., in *Brescia Beata cit.*, f.415). In 1532, Girolamo Patengola was a member of the smaller Council of the Hospital for Incurables, but the function of "first treasurer" which is attributed to him here does not exist in the vocabulary then in use. As for the expression "Ospital nuovo della Casa della Carità", it refers to the hospice recently opened in the house "della Carità".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>88</sup> Bull "Regimini" of Paul III, dated 3 August 1535, ASV, Reg. Vat. 1693, ff.10r-11r. [19r-20r]; "Pro rectoribus Hospitalis Incurabilium Brixien. et Laura de Gambara ac Elisabecta de Bargnanis, etiam Brixien. Confirmatio statutorum et ordinationum super gubernio mulierum convertitarum, f.19" in *Indice 288 cit.*, f.249r [237r]. The Bull presents the new institution as follows: "... praefatis mulieribus ac nonnullis aliis nobilibus civibus civitatis intervenientibus, orphanae et aliae mulieres poenitere volentes... in magno numero coadunatae et in duabus separatis domibus [it was like this

lii rectores hospitalis incurabilium Brixiensis et dilectae in Christo filiae Laura de Gambara ac Helisabeth de Bargnanis mulieres etiam Brixienses..." who as well as other noble citizens were concerned about the poor orphans and repentant prostitutes.

The Pope approved the statutes and the rules of this institution on behalf of the penitent women and the orphans, gave permission for new

ones to be made, and granted certain privileges.

But in 1534, Isabetta had declared her goods, both debit and credit, under the surname of Prato. It is not easy to see how, about the same period, her name is given as Bargnani in the petition; nor does this name ever appear in the documents of the Company known to us. For the Company and for all the civil and canonical acts connected with it, there exists only "Isabetta Prato". "Isabetta Prato", for Angela, too, when the "Madre" numbers her among the matrons to whom her Testament is dedicated.

For the moment, there is nothing to throw any light on the kind of relationship which existed between Angela and Isabetta. Angela herself would certainly have given the young widow spiritual guidance, encouraging her to support Laura Gambara in the work she was doing to protect women and to reintegrate them into society. But in all the documentation we studied about this charitable organisation, we found no allusion, even indirect, to Angela Merici.

Witnesses and biographers have all recognised Angela's amazing capacity for adapting herself to everyone who spoke to her. This gift must have been exercised, surely, by the advice and spiritual inspiration she offered, especially to those who were closest to her, beginning with those fervent and hard-working lay-people, of which the matrons of the Company would be a good example: each one in her own family and social setting, and also collectively for the good of the virgins of St Ursula.

Having said this, it does not seem necessary to us to accept Guerrini's conclusion. He was the first to involve Angela Merici in some way in the works of charity of Laura Gambara and Isabetta Prato: "Angela Merici's name does not appear in the context of these charitable works; but she was certainly not missing from them, as is clearly indicated by the names of Elisabetta da Prato and Girolamo Patengola, who are among her closest collaborators in other works of a similar kind, faithful interpreters of her ideal of the Christian redemption of Brescian young

at the beginning] in ipsa civitate Rectorum Hospitalis Incurabilium dictae civitatis gubernio et regimine reductae ac reclusae fuerunt...".

girls and women at that period of time when, mixed with the ferments of so much widespread and worrying evil, there were not lacking, through God's providential disposition, so many seeds of life and of goodness".89

Guerrini refers to "other works of a similar kind", but he does not elaborate what they were, and so he opens the door to suppositions and

inferences which, even today, cannot be documented.

In the Annali della Carità, next to Isabetta's name we found that of Damisella di Rossi. In her 1548 "polizza", Isabetta declares that she has living with her "dona Damisella de anni 60" (she then crosses it out because "decessit") and also a "sor Chaterina del Terzo Ordene de anni 27" (adding: "it must be known that the said Sor Chaterina is ill with an incurable disease"). The two women were living with Isabetta, not as servants but as paying-guests. In 1568, Sor Chaterina is still alive, but she has been an invalid for a year; this time, Isabetta declares that she is keeping her at her own expense.

But in 1534, apart from the usual domestic staff, Isabetta had declared that she had in her house, completely at her expense, "two girls whom she wants to marry off" ("doye pute quale la le vole maridar"). Was this the customary good work on behalf of the "young girls of the Hospital" (that is, those abandoned) entrusted to families who accepted to bring them up or to take them in as servants? Or was it a case of Isabetta taking in two little orphan-girls who, for some reason, had remained with her instead of going to the house "della Carità"?

We will meet Isabetta Prato again among the number of matrons to whom Angela will dedicate her Testament; 90 later still, with surprise, we will meet her with the party of Lucrezia Lodrone, who wanted to introduce the use of the cincture and other innovations, 91 instead of remaining with Ginevra Luzzago who tried so hard to defend 'Angela's original idea; we will see her once more, short-listed with Veronica Buzzi in the 1555 elections, 92 and finally, in 1572, when she herself will be elected mother general of the Company.93 She will hold this position until her death in July 1580.94

<sup>89</sup> GUERRINI, La Compagnia, op. cit., pp.116-117: "In questa benefica attività non appare il nome di Angela Merici; ma essa non vi è stata certamente assente, e ce lo indicano chiaramente i nomi di Elisabetta da Prato e di Girolamo Patengola, che sono fra i più vicini collaboratori della Merici in altre iniziative dello stesso genere, interpreti fedeli del suo ideale di redenzione cristiana della gioventù femminile di Brescia, in quel medesimo periodo di tempo, nel quale tra i fermenti del male così diffuso e preoccupante non mancano, per provvidenziale disposizione divina, tanti germi di vita e di bontà". 90 D5.

<sup>91</sup> Secondo Libro Generale, f.35r.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., f.54v. D26.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., ff.55v-56r. principles or give learn, Care ed. Leichen, Milane, 1985, p. 90.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., f.40r.

Isabetta Prato did not leave any testimony about Angela Merici as a person, but her gift of the oratory witnesses to her devoted admiration for the "Madre" and to her own active participation in the realisation of Angela's work.

#### h) Two minor witnesses

Two other eye-witnesses, Bertolino Boscoli and Canon Don Giacomo Tribesco, have left us some precise information.

Don Tribesco must have known Angela when she went to live at St Afra; she had told him something about her life of penance and some memories of her own youth at Salò. In 1591, he had put these souvenirs together in written evidence; we have already quoted from this testimony. We also know his *Trattato del modo di vivere d'una Dimessa*, published in Padua in 1589, in which he sketched the ideal profile of the virgin of the Company of St Ursula.

Bertolino Boscoli was the second of the witnesses of the "Processo Nazari"; his testimony reveals the sincerity and honesty of the man. He recalls the reputation for sanctity and sobriety which surrounded Angela even while he himself was still a young boy; he remembers that sometimes he used to go and see her, and he tells the story of the episode in Angela's life that had struck him most: the ecstasy she had had in the church of San Barnaba, when under their very eyes, the onlookers had seen Angela raised from the ground, and he concludes: "And I do not know what else I can say, nor do I remember anything else concerning the said 'Madre Suor Angela' ".97 It is evident that, in his simplicity and moral integrity, Bertolino has not consulted the other witnesses, nor has he tried to find out information from others who had known Angela. He is quite content to relate what he saw with his own eyes when he was about sixteen years old.

In 1568, the year of the "Processo" and also of the tax-returns, Bertolino filled in his own "polizza": 98 son of the late "Girardo di boschi alti", "maringono" (that is, a carpenter or blacksmith), he is 50 years old; Caterina, his wife, is 45 years; their sons, Gianmaria and Battista, are 30

<sup>95</sup> D25.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>96</sup> GIACOMO TRIBESCO, Trattato breve del santo vivere che tener debbe una virgine posta nello stato delle Demesse. Composto per il R.P.D. Giacomo Tribesco Bresciano Can. Reg. Lat. Distinto in quattro Capitoli. Con una santa essortatione dopo li Capitoli dal Autore gionti. In Padova, appresso Lorenzo Pasquati Impressor de l'Alma Università de'Legisti, 1589.
<sup>97</sup> D16.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>98</sup> PE, n.26.

and 28 respectively. Both of the sons are married; both of them act as witnesses to the deposition of Antonio Romano as well as that of their own father.

The minutes of the notary Nazari, at the opening of the process, call them "omnibus de Boscoldis de Ottalengo habitatoribus Brixiae"; but then the minutes which introduce Bertolino's deposition call him "de Boscolis de Ottalengo", and it is as "Boscoli" that he has entered Merician historiography. The two surnames, "Boscoli" and "Boscoldi" could both be equally accurate. The second one, in fact, could have originated from the local pronunciation of the nickname given to Bertolino's father, Girardo "di boschi alti".

Their village of origin, Othalengum in the 15th century, was derived from an earlier Guttulengum in the 11th century, and Gottolengh in dialect or Otalengh, would become Gotalengo in the 16th century. Today it is called Gottolengo and is situated between Leno and Gambara.<sup>99</sup>

These Boscolis did not have Brescian citizenship, but they resided in the provincial capital, according to Bertolino's statement in 1568.

Thirty-four years had passed from the time when, as a young boy, he had seen Angela in ecstasy, but he had never forgotten the event, struck as he was with wonder and admiration at the sight; he related the story in his own simple, unrehearsed language, but always with the same sense of marvel and wonder.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>99</sup> Arnaldo Gnaga, Vocabolario topografico-toponomastico della Provincia di Brescia, Ateneo di Brescia, appendice ai Commentari per l'anno 1936, p.296; Dante Olivieri, Dizionario di Toponomastica lombarda, 2ª edizione riveduta e completata, Casa ed. Ceschina, Milano, 1961, p.265.

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# Chapter IV

## THE YEARS AT BRESCIA: THE TESTIMONIES

The testimonies of Romano, Gallo and Cozzano are the most useful and valid ones for reconstructing the daily life Angela led during her years in Brescia. The first two, as eye-witnesses, have left direct evidence of what they had seen happening under their own eyes, while the secre-

tary of the "Madre" presents things from a different angle.

The events which they relate, or to which they refer, have their deepest explanation in the spiritual orientation of Angela's own life, but we are not going to dwell on this here. We are going to deal with the events from the historical point of view so that we can place them in their context, and also complete or add to the information which earlier historiography had only dealt with in an approximate manner, or had even totally ignored.

### a) The "apostolic" life

Gabriele Cozzano describes Angela Merici's life as "apostolic". Towards the end of the 16th century, this word acquired the meaning which it retains today, and clearly influenced by this, we immediately think in terms of an activity carried out by Angela to spread the "good news" in her surroundings; in other words, we think of what we call "apostolate" today. But this is not the real meaning of the adjective "apostolic" when it is used in the pre-Tridentine language. While we tend to think of apostolic life as being institutional and involving a certain well-planned and organised pastoral concern, in pre-Tridentine thinking the expression quite simply refers to the Apostles and to Tradition.

Thus, compared with the modern sense, the word "apostolic" under Cozzano's pen has a specific and unique content. For him, "apostolic" is something which can be assimilated by analogy to the "sequela Christi", as it was carried out by the twelve apostles while continuing to live in the world, and as it was lived by the first disciples and first Christians, following and imitating their example.

Unlike Gallo and Romano, Gabriele Cozzano had been much more than a host and an observer; his conversations with Angela used to range far beyond the current problems of daily life, even though this life was fully open and attuned to the slightest echo concerning people and things happening in Brescia. We are speaking here of the conversations about that ideal of life which Angela would propose to her daughters after having embodied it, day after day, year after year. Cozzano might not have understood its implications in all their richness and variety, and he might not have grasped the full mystical meaning of the gift of self understood as nuptial relationship with the Son of the Most High, as taught by the "Madre", but even so he had intuited its sublimity.

When later, after the Foundress' death, he sets out the programme of evangelical life which she had proposed to the virgins of the Company of St Ursula, he will be able to say, after he has gone through its main points: "Such was the kind of life led by the Foundress of this Company", and "She was this kind of person".

Cozzano will excuse himself for not being able to spend time writing about the life of Angela by saying that he has too much to do, but at least he will leave behind a clear testimony of the Merician way of living the evangelical message without shutting oneself away behind the walls of the cloister.

And it is precisely this specific way of living that he describes as "apostolic": "life according to that lived by the Apostles and early Church", "early, apostolic life", "the most perfect life there has ever been or ever will be, because it is continuing what was the flower of all lives. The life of St Martha, of St Thecla, of all the first flowers of the Holy Church, and especially of the Madonna". A life following Christ, in obedience to the Holy Spirit, interior guide and teacher, in detachment from earthly goods which are used in a spirit of poverty; a life of toil, earning one's living. A life in the world conforming to "that model of life which Jesus Christ, coming forth from the bosom of the Father, brought from heaven. And which he wanted to live. Such is the life followed by his Apostles. And the martyrs. And so many beautiful virgins of the primitive Church. And above all the Madonna".

Thus a life "active, but with the mind always raised heavenwards"; an absolute dependence on superiors in the use of goods or in their distribution "for the perfect mortification and the total abnegation of one-self"; a fidelity to the duties proper to one's state of life, without losing

<sup>1</sup> COZZANO, Risposta, D23, ff.37r; 51r.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Ibid. ff.11r-v; 31v.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Ibid. ff.42r-v; 37r; 49v-50r.

that special peace of mind of one who places one's trust in the "peaceful help and consolation of the Holy Spirit"; a "height of contemplation" which does not take one's mind off the daily activity, and an attention to duty which does not distract one from experiencing the things of God.

Cozzano insists particularly on this synthesis of contemplation and action, on this harmony between the supernatural dimension, which penetrates the human dimension, and the human dimension itself, concealed in the hard work of the daily reality. But in the use he makes of the term "apostolic", we do not find any explicit connection with the spread of the Christian ideal through preaching or witnessing to a truly evangelical life.

The portrait of the Ursuline virgin, modelled on that of the "Madre", thus seems to be fixed for ever with a special attention to the

inner life.

Two notations, however, two direct references to Angela, give substance to a profile which at first sight would appear to be a simple outline; they throw light on the most concrete exterior expressions of her life.

Cozzano, speaking about the spirit of poverty, says that St Paul the apostle, "although he was able to live legitimately by the Gospel, as others had done, wanted to earn his living by working". Then he immediately adds: "Such was the kind of life led by the Foundress of this Company". We have in front of us here an exact parallel, which up to now has scarcely been noticed. It is perhaps the only direct reference we have of this kind, but as it is to be found in Cozzano's Risposta, which seems to have been unknown at the time-of the process of beatification, such a reference remained unheeded; and so we are left with the fixed stereotype of a saint who had lived on alms.

According to Cozzano, though, Angela earned her living by working. Nothing specific is said about the nature of this work. This very silence of the direct witnesses leads us to think that it was a matter of such ordinary occupations that they passed unnoticed: giving some help with the household chores, or perhaps some sewing or spinning, the kind of work done by women of humble means, so normal as to warrant no special mention. Such as we have imagined happening during her stay in the Patengola household was very likely repeated when she stayed with Antonio Romano and later on.

4 I Cor. 9:13-18 and Acts 18:3. Risposta, D23, f.37r.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> In fact, it is not to be found among the documents referred to and examined in the course of the process.

In the same document, there is a second parallel to which Cozzano returns with insistence, namely the link between the Company's form of life and that of the Apostles and the early Christians, in contrast with the following of Christ as carried out in the convents. And here the author, exasperated by the crisis the Company passed through when the temptation to withdraw into the enclosed monasteries was gaining ground, launches into a polemic. But at the same time, while he is comparing the two different ways of life, indirectly he is drawing attention to the daily problems confronting the virgins: "with their own hands they have to earn their living, and live by their daily toil"(f.8r); "they spend money, not according to their own will, but according to who governs"; "those who have nothing live joyfully, day by day, for having all the more reason to be dependent solely on God through faith and hope"(f.11v); they live a virginal life in the world in the midst of dangers; they know the difficulty of using their own liberty wisely. Then, comparing this form of life with the one lived in the cloisters, Cozzano finally finds the key phrase: "And so the Apostles, and so many other martyrs, virgins and confessors, in the midst of the labours they were undertaking for the one and pure love of God, were at a much higher level in God than others ever were who, freed from the affairs of the world, devoted themselves entirely to contemplation"(f.51r). All things considered, there is only one good work: to carry out the duties imposed by everyday life, but to see them through, strengthened with the one and pure love of God. "Such is the life of this Company. Of such a kind was the Foundress. That celestial virgin has been a new apostle in our age of corruption".

"New apostle", according to Cozzano, on account of her way of living the "sequela Christi" while continuing to remain in the world, and for having thus restored that way of life which had been the patrimony of the early Christian Church.

But also, and we are saying this today, through the way she used to face daily life "sub specie aeternitatis", which could not have passed unnoticed by those around her or left them unimpressed.

Welcoming the message which came to them through the example and words of the "Madre", her daughters would be able to claim for themselves the dignity of spouses of Christ without entering a cloister; herein lies perhaps the most interesting socio-religious implication because it touches on the promotion of women. Apostles in their turn, and this would be a second socio-religious implication of the Merician institution, they would be able, through their widespread action of witness and of service, to permeate urban society with a new leaven.

If the oratory of "Divino Amore", numerically small in size, could reach a certain section of society through its own secret structures, the great longing for a life lived openly in the light of the "one and pure divine love" was the leaven paving the way for the reform of the Church among wider levels of society. Inserted into this perspective, the virgins of the Company of St Ursula, following in their Foundress' footsteps and present at every social level, would be able to spread the evangelical message by their word and by their life.

### b) The life of prayer

Cozzano's insistence on the twofold expression contemplationaction, which sums up for him the way of life set out for the virgins of the Company of St Ursula, and also the first testimonies collected together by the biographers, lead us to examine the role of contemplation in Angela's daily life.

Among them all, it is Agostino Gallo perhaps who gives us the most balanced and restrained account of Angela's daily habits, without falling into the temptation of apologia; he had seen her at close range for several months, and at Brescia he lived opposite the church of San Cle-

mente, where his guest no doubt often used to go.

A more perceptive observer than Antonio Romano, and more experienced in analysing what he observed, Gallo succeeded in discerning in Angela's spiritual life the secret of her convictions and of her courageous asceticism: "And it is not to be wondered at that she led such a harsh life and praised virginity, chastity and fasts so warmly ... since she used to communicate every day that she could, remaining before the Blessed Sacrament several hours in the mornings to hear the masses". Beyond the customary gesture and the outward signs of devotion, Gallo had instinctively perceived in Angela's sacramental life the determining factor which gave coherence and persuasive efficacy to her action.

This woman "belonged more to heaven than to earth", as he said at the "Processo"; and as "she used to sleep very little, she probably spent the greater part of the night in prayer, contemplating and considering those divine things which are granted to very few people to see". This was only a conjecture on Gallo's part, but it was also his way of expressing what he had noticed about his guest – a continuous attraction of her

spirit towards meeting God.

7 Processo Nazari, D16.

8 Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Cf. infra, the Appendix Note to Chapter V.

Some more concrete indications about Angela's life of prayer are provided for us by the norms that she herself laid down for the members of the Company, and by the accompanying reasons given for them: both the norms and the reasons betray a consummate experience, the fruit of a prolonged habit.

Addressing herself to the district superiors of the Company, the "colonelle", Angela recommends that they conform first of all to the disciplinary rules, especially those concerned with the sacramental life and other "similar good actions. For it is right and fitting that the mothers

be an example and a mirror for their daughters ...".9

Mother and mistress of her followers, in no way could Angela not have taken the path before them, and she certainly must have accompanied them in their practice of that intense life of prayer which she had recommended to them. But in recommending it, she had not forgotten to add a short didactic note, one of those notes of wisdom she scatters among her teachings, to prevent her followers from making any kind of confusion beween the means and the end: "by prayer, we implore from God the true grace of the spiritual life; ... we must pray unceasingly ... because of the continual need we have of God's help". 10 Prayer which is life and breath involves the whole being, and so all the senses: "we also advise frequent vocal prayer, for it is through the bodily senses that we dispose ourselves for mental prayer"; here again Angela reveals psychological finesse. At the same time, she manifests that she is also a daughter of her age, so close still to the "devotio moderna", the devotion in which affectivity played such an important role in one's personal relationship with God, and vocal prayer was indispensable as a channel for the outpouring of religious feelings.

Angela certainly used to recite the Office of Our Lady as is proved by the existence of her small breviary – a description of it will be given in the documentary Appendix <sup>11</sup> –, and by the fact that she prescribes the recitation of it in Chapter VI of the Rule. She adds to this the seven penitential psalms, also to be said daily by the members of the Company; these psalms normally formed an appendix to the breviary and their recitation was a very popular devotion. Angela herself must have practised it.

It is known that Angela hesitated a long time before setting up the Company – more will be said about this later. We can conclude,

11 D10.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Counsels, 6th Counsel, D4. <sup>10</sup> Rule, Chapter VI, D2.

therefore, that she had sought in prayer the light and strength to fulfil her vocation when we read in the Prologue to the *Counsels* her exhortation to the "colonelle": "How earnestly, then, you must beg God to enlighten you and direct you and teach you what you have to do for love of him in this task …".<sup>12</sup>

The analogous recommendation addressed to the lady-governors of the Company gives a hint as to how much prayer had been demanded of Angela in the drawing up of the Rule; a prayer, in this case, in which gradually the norms "prayed" before God were to take form and expression in that spare, precise and essential language, so very characteristic of the Rule. Strengthened by this experience, she will urge the "matrons" of the government: "And if, according to times and needs, new rules should be made, or any change introduced, do it prudently and with good advice. And always may your first recourse be to gather together at the feet of Jesus Christ ...".13

Angela did not prescribe saying the rosary, but she must have said it herself. The Atti dei Processi, in fact, have handed down to us the description of her beads. We do not know in what way or how often she used to turn to this prayer, since no-one has ever made any reference to it. For her it might have been one of those "vocal prayers" which she believed had the merit and function of leading one into contemplation. She had prescribed the recitation each day "at least" of the Office of Our Lady and of the seven penitential psalms; it can be assumed that this was the daily minimum. It was no small task, taking into account the difficulty of reading in Latin for those who even knew how to read, at a time when illiteracy was the norm. And it was no small thing, if we remember that those who were illiterate, instead of saying the Office, had to say a total of 75 Our Fathers and the same number of Hail Marys, spaced out during the day in line with the canonical Hours. 15

The chapters of the Merician Rule concerned with the evangelical counsels and prayer, <sup>16</sup> the visions of her youth and other biographical episodes, all lead to the conclusion that Angela had gone through some mystical experiences. Evidence about one such experience has been left by the Bertolino Boscoli who used to live not far from St Afra and whom we met in the preceding chapter.

Angela, who was already living in one of the houses belonging to

<sup>12</sup> Counsels [Prologue], D4.

<sup>13</sup> Testament, Last Legacy, D5.

<sup>14</sup> D10.

<sup>15</sup> Rule, Chapter VI, D2.

<sup>16.</sup> Ibid., respectively Chapters IX, X, XI, VI.

the Canons of the Lateran, had gone to mass in San Barnaba, a church nearby. It was a weekday, but even so, the congregation was quite large; the mass was celebrated at the altar of San Nicola da Tolentino. During the reading of the Gospel (relates Bertolino), "not only I, but many of those who were present at that mass saw her also, I saw the said Madre Suor Angela standing and raised almost a hand's breadth from the ground, and she remained like this for some little time, to the great amazement of everyone present". Bertolino was only sixteen at the time, and yet certain details had remained so vivid to him that they give his account a note of authenticity. He does not say that everyone saw it, but only many of those present; he does not say that he saw Angela "in the air", but only lifted about a hand's breadth from the ground. He adds, however, that news of this had spread throughout the city, and that many had thus come to hear about the sanctity of the "Madre".

Even before Bertolino, Francesco Landini had written in his short portrait of the Foundress: "She was seen, during the time of prayer, with her body lifted in the air". 18 Bellintani would write later that the "good woman" who used to live with her had seen her "absorbed in God in prayer and detached from her senses, with her body notably lifted from

the ground ".19 But Doneda did not include this last account.

Angela's life of prayer must have been nourished by reading, and according to the testimony of Agostino Gallo, it appears that she read a lot: "she used to read a number of spiritual books"; and again: "she was not short of spiritual books to read, when there were no people around to take up her time in some good work". Both Gallo and Chizzola stress the fact that she understood Latin and knew how to interpret the Holy Scriptures. One finds further proof of this in her Writings, especially in the Rule, where biblical quotations appear spontaneously and form part of the context in question in order to give the backing of "God's word" to the Madre's teachings and admonitions. Whether it was a charisma or whether it was the fruit of an extraordinary perceptive insight and an amazing instinct for the language, we cannot say. It was perhaps a question of a gift, "gratis dato" in view of the mission that was to be undertaken, one more gift to be added to the others granted to her.

Put on her guard by what she had heard tell of the trap of illusion into which some pseudo-mystics had fallen, Angela would always look

18 LANDINI, Estratto, op. cit., D15.

20 Processo Nazari, D16.

<sup>17</sup> Processo Nazari, D16.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> BELLINTANI, *Vita, op. cit.*, BQ, ms.B.VI.30, F.[9v]; "orando esser assorta in Dio, et alienata da sensi co'l corpo istesso da terra notabilmente alzato".

on extraordinary deeds with prudence and caution. She herself would confide to Gallo how Satan had appeared to her in her youth in the guise of an angel of light, and he would draw the following conclusion from it: "And this story in truth was the one that convinced me that she was a great servant of God, much more than did all the holy works that I saw in her, because there was always in her a deep humility ...".<sup>21</sup>

### c) The life of penance

The contemplation of Christ's life has always kindled in the saints the desire to conform themselves to him and to share in his redemptive mission by penance voluntarily embraced. Two eye-witnesses in particular have handed down to us the most reliable information about the austerities practised by Angela, while certain documents of the Processes reveal some other aspects of them.<sup>22</sup>

The young Romano was able to see unfolding before his admiring eyes, for nearly fourteen years, day after day, constantly, a life which to him touched on the supernatural. Agostino Gallo, on the other hand, would have witnessed this for only a few months. Their accounts differ in style, just as their social backgrounds differed, and very likely also their cultural formation, but with regard to the contents they are in agreement: Angela did not sleep in a bed, but on some matting; she had replaced the pillow with a piece of wood; she used to drink only water; she ate no meat, but only bread, fruit and vegetables.

It is not clear what the two witnesses – and Giacomo Chizzola can be added to them – meant by the expression "fruit and vegetables"; whether, for example, "vegetables" to them meant only edible herbs, or whether they had in mind garden produce in general, and including,

therefore, also vegetables.

Nothing is said, either, of those polentas made from poor cereals, which in the 16th century – before the introduction of the potato and maize in Italy – formed the staple diet of people living in the country and those of humble means. Rye, spelt, millet and sorghum, which had a wider cultivation than wheat – all these, ground into flour and cooked, were a substitute for the wheaten bread, which was eaten by the wealthy and by the city folk who could afford it.

Romano and Gallo record that Angela drank only water. It is true that there is abundant water in the region, but there are also some excel-

<sup>22</sup> D10, D11.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Ibid. Cf. supra, Pt.II, Ch.II, 1.e.

lent wines; to abstain from these, allowing herself only a finger of wine at Christmas and at Easter, as was her custom, was certainly an act of penance.

We have already pointed out the fasts and the abstinences that the Rule of the Franciscan Third Order imposed on its members.<sup>23</sup> However, certain relaxations were allowed, especially on grounds of health or for travel. Between Easter and the feast of St Francis, those who were faced with very heavy work, such as at times of haymaking, harvesting, ploughing and sowing, were even allowed three meals a day. Angela does not appear to have availed herself of any of these dispensations. Based as they were, though, on sound common sense, on prudence and understanding, they provided her with a lesson in human understanding which she, in her turn, would put into practice: in her Rule, in the chapter on fasting,<sup>24</sup> she mitigates the severity of the fasts for the weakest, even if, as a general norm, the fasts that she lays down are stricter than those of the Franciscan Rule, since she adds on the forty days after Epiphany. This "lenten" fast of Epiphany came about "in honour of the fast that was kept by Christ in the desert at that time, according to the early tradition of the Church. There is a reference to such a fast at the second Council of Tours, held in 567, when in prescribing to the monks the observance of the fasts they had kept from the earliest times, it requires that post Epiphaniam usque ad Quadragesimam ter in septimana jejunent".25 An explanation of these additional forty days lies in that christocentrism which is one of the mainsprings of Merician spirituality.

Angela also adds the Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays of every week after the Easter octave; then the Ember days, the three Rogation days, the whole novena of Pentecost, and once more three days a week from Pentecost until Advent. One must bear in mind, however, as we have already noted, that fasting did not entail abstaining from meat except on the days of abstinence; one substantial midday meal was allowed as well as a light meal in the evening. Drinking also was allowed during the day; water of course, but also wine or other drinks.<sup>26</sup>

If the fast-days that Angela lists in the Rule are so numerous, we must take for granted that she imposed at least as much upon herself, and this would confirm the statement of her witnesses that she used to

24 Rule, Chapter V, D2.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.46-59 passim.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. supra Pt.II, Ch.II, 1.d.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> GAETANO MORONI, *Dizionario di erudizione Storico-Ecclesiastica...*, article "digiuno", vol.XX, in Venezia, dalla tipografia Emiliana, 1843, p.55.

fast all the time. Having practised fasting faithfully from the time of her youth, she must have become trained to bear it without any injury to herself in her mature years. This in no way, however, made her fail to recognise the burden it was or to underestimate its possible consequences. In certain circumstances, such a way of life could have proved itself to be imprudent or foolhardy. Hence the wise counsel she gives to her daughters: no-one should take upon herself the right to decide how she will carry out this act of penance; nor will it be enough just to consult the spiritual director, as he might be unaware of some special circumstances or certain health problems which might warrant an attenuation. This is why each one must seek explicit approval from the ladygovernors of the Company, considered as being the only persons competent to decide the matter.<sup>27</sup>

Always consistent with her own criteria of spiritual pedagogy, once again Angela tries to avoid any confusion between the means and the end; in itself fasting has no value, but the value lies in the reasons behind it.

In proposing to her daughters intentions for their fasting,<sup>28</sup> Angela reveals what were at least some of the reasons which used to help her to face it herself. For the forty days after the Epiphany, she suggests "imploring before the Throne of the Most High and begging for mercy for the great amount of evil committed by Christians at this time" (thus, asking pardon for all the sins during carnival-time); for the three days before the Ascension, "to implore God's help for the Christian people"; for the Pentecost novena, to ask for the gift of the Holy Spirit "promised by Christ to his chosen ones, who are deeply sorry for their sins". These three intentions, in an ascending scale, express Angela's zeal for the salvation and the sanctification of men.

On the subject of Angela's penances, Agostino Gallo would not hesitate to talk about the "violent hunger" she endured, and he would also draw attention to the "scorching heat" and "extreme cold". Anyone familiar with the Brescian climate knows how oppressive the heat can be in summer; to find any relief, one really has to search for it. And anyone who has experienced Brescian winters knows how harsh they are, and how the water can freeze inside the houses at night. But tradition has it that Angela refused even the elementary means of heating which poor people used in their houses at that time, such as braziers or bricks heated under the ashes of the fireplace.

28 Ibid

<sup>27</sup> Rule, Chapter V, D2.

Bellintani, followed by Gondi,<sup>29</sup> would relate that Angela, when she had to change her chemise, used to wet it first in cold water before putting it on. These same two authors were the first to assert that sometimes her sole food was the Eucharist. We have already expressed our disagreement with them concerning the spectacular forms of penance which they attributed to Angela.

There is one thing, however, which we know for certain: Angela wore a hair-shirt and she used to scourge herself with a discipline. This is attested by the documents which we are publishing in this book <sup>30</sup> and

which we have taken from the Atti del Processo.

## d) The "good offices"

We do not really know how Angela interpreted the second half of the expression "contemplation-action", in other words how she carried out in practice those good works which behove all Christians, and which could well come under the phrase used by Gallo: "... and then spending the entire day in good offices to her neighbours". We do not know exactly how she occupied her days outside the time devoted to prayer. The information supplied by Gallo only deals with the period when Angela was living under his eyes.

Romano says absolutely nothing on this subject. It seems as if, from the fourteen years that Angela had lived under his roof, he had remembered only the episodes which had caught his imagination because of their extraordinariness, forgetting the daily events of a simple life, with no fixed engagements.

There is one particular episode, for example, that he is the only one to hand down to us, the peaceful solution of a challenge to a duel. In spite of the shadowy areas surrounding its date and the identity of the persons for whom Angela offered her good services, the various biographers in their turn have included this account in their pages.

The two contenders were, according to Romano, Filippo Sala and Francesco Martinengo; the Duke d'Urbino had tried to reconcile them,

but in vain.

Although we made a thorough search, we did not succeed in finding anywhere any reference to this affair which, considering the eminent people involved, would not have escaped the chronicles of the time or

BELLINTANI, Vita, op. cit., BQ, ms.B.VI.30, f.[5r-v]; BELLINTANI, Monumenta, op. cit., p.82, § 89;
 GONDI, Vita, op. cit., p.20.
 D10, D11.

the Decrees of the city General Council, which used to deal with matters of this kind.

In making known some other people with the same names as the two contenders, we are not claiming to identify them; we simply want to shed some possible light on the affair.

- Filippo di Sali, from the district of San Faustino. In 1517 he is thirty-two years old; his wife, Modesta, is twenty-four, and their little boy, Ercole, is four. He has two men-servants, a steward, a maid-servant and two horses. He is in debt to a Martinengo; <sup>31</sup>
- Filippino Sala, murderer of his own sister. It appears that he had also killed Carlo Valgulio, archpriest of Iseo, on 7 January 1517.<sup>32</sup> "Vir pessimus, omicida, latro, sacrilegus et omni genere malorum patronus et magister" is how Branchino da Paratico, quoted by Pasero,<sup>33</sup> describes him.

He died in prison in 1532, after being sentenced for abuse and assault against public authorities.<sup>34</sup> If Angela had tried to dissuade such a man from fighting a duel, and had been successful, the event would have caused quite a stir.

The list is longer for the Francesco Martinengos:

- "Zohan Francesco di Ieronimo, nodaro". In 1517, he is thirty-four years old; Maddalena, his wife, is twenty-four. They have two small boys, and a "sister of marriageable age" who is twelve; 35
- "Francesco ditto della Motella". In 1534 he is thirty-seven; his wife, Barbara, is twenty-seven. They have five children; <sup>36</sup>
- "Zoan Francesco", referred to in the Chronicles of Marin Sanudo as "giudice del maleficio", in other words, an examining magistrate in the penal law-court. On 17 February 1525, in the exercise of his duties, he had written a letter giving the information that some soldiers had been killed, stripped, and their bodies concealed beneath the ground. The tone is that of the magistrate who is trying to carry out his duty with impartiality; <sup>37</sup>
- "Francesco bechar in Bressa". In 1534 (PE, n.84) he is fifty-four years

<sup>31</sup> PE, n.119 and n.237.

<sup>32</sup> BARTOLOMEO PALAZZO, Diario cit. in GUERRINI, Le Cronache Bresciane inedite, t.I, p.301.

<sup>33</sup> PASERO, Il domino veneto, op. cit., p.309, n.1.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> Annali di Brescia dall'anno 1030 al 1530, BQ, ms.C.I.3, col.135.

<sup>35</sup> PE, n.84 and n.213.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> MARINO SANUTO [MARIN SANUDO, in Venice], *I diari di Marino Sanuto...* a cura di Federico Stefani, Guglielmo Berchet, Nicolò Barozzi...Venezia 1893, t.XXXVII, col.621-622.

old and his wife, Ioanna, is forty-two. They live in the San Faustino district; they have one married son, Vincenzo, and three other young boys. Vincenzo, in his turn, has two sons. Three servants are kept in the house. On the list of those owing him money there is a Sala. Could he be perhaps the first of the two Salas we have mentioned? And this last-mentioned Martinengo, his enemy? It could well be.

Anyhow, as the intervention of the Duke d'Urbino, Francesco Maria della Rovere, and of the Rectors and nobles of the city had met with no success, the respective wives of the two men had turned to Angela to settle the dispute between the parties. She had spoken to each of the men directly – and this must have required some courage on her part – but finally she had achieved her object. Faino wrote that the affair had been brought to an end, "much to the amazement of all the City". 38

It is difficult to date this episode. Lombardi places it in 1528,<sup>39</sup> because some historiographers mention that in that year the Duke d'Urbino, a captain in the pay of Venice, was in Brescia. Actually, the *Diario* of Bartolomeo Palazzo records that already since 1524 the Duke had stayed a number of times at Brescia,<sup>40</sup> but at that particular time Angela

was making her pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

At the beginning of March 1525, the Duke was again in Brescia. Even though this was indeed the year of the pilgrimage to Rome, Angela might not yet have started out on the journey as the good weather was late coming that year. Easter, in fact, fell on 16 April. So in March, Angela could still have been in Brescia. The Duke had returned there again in April and May, and likewise in the following years.

Romano recalled another incident which he had witnessed directly when he was accompanying Angela to Mantua, on her pilgrimage to the tomb of Blessed Osanna. She had made a detour to carry out a work of charity: to offer her mediation with the aim of obtaining pardon for someone she knew. This man, guilty of some serious offence, had been severely punished. Angela was going to ask his master to reinstate him to the position from which he had been banished.

The aggrieved master, this time, was Luigi Alessandro Gonzaga di Castiglione, son of Rodolfo and grandson of Luigi III; an arrogant man, quick to perpetrate any kind of misdeed, very severe as an administrator of justice. Accompanied by his wife, Caterina d'Anguisola, celebrated for her virtue and beauty, he was at Solferino at that particular time. He had

<sup>38</sup> FAINO, Vita, op. cit., p.40.

LOMBARDI, Vita, op. cit., p.154, note (c).
 BARTOLOMEO PALAZZO, Diario, op. cit., passim.

agreed to see Angela there, and she had pleaded the cause of the accused man; Luigi had allowed himself to be persuaded and had pardoned him. Afterwards, his son Ferdinando (the father of the future St Aloysius) would name one of his daughters Angela.<sup>41</sup> Perhaps it was in memory of the saintly woman who had visited his parents and who had succeeded in overcoming his father's hardness of heart.

Opinions differ about the relationship which existed between Angela and the man she was protecting. Romano says that the man involved was "un famigliare, amico della madre suor Angela", in other words a man in Gonzaga's service, who knew Angela very well. Nazari in his *Vita* has a different view: "un parente della reverenda Madre". Is this the result of a further inquiry and a rectification by Romano or did the notary himself misinterpret what Romano had said at the "Processo"?

A legitimate doubt persists, certainly, over the word "famigliare" used by Romano. In what rank among Gonzaga's "familiari" could one find a man who owned possessions that could be confiscated? He could not have belonged to the class of ordinary servants, that is certain; it is more likely that he was a courtier, perhaps a vassal, who had property more or less substantial.

Gondi calls him "un bandito", and Faino "a bandit, whose goods were confiscated on account of his wrongdoing". Both of them use the participle of the verb "bandire" (to banish) as a noun (bandit). Lombardi, who believes that the man is a relative of Angela, seems to give the word "bandito" a pejorative meaning and makes him guilty of "certain crimes". He lays emphasis on the respectful and kind welcome that Angela had enjoyed, "to the point of obtaining on behalf of a relative of hers the lifting of the banishment, and the restitution of all the goods which had been confiscated from him by public decree because of certain crimes". On this assumed kinship with the "bandito", endowed with considerable property, Lombardi also bases his view that Angela's economic situation would not have been "as humble as some people have made it out to be". 43

Doneda himself had not discovered anything more precise by way of information, since he simply mentions the fact that the Signore di Ca-

LITTA, Famiglie celebri d'Italia, Paolo Emilio Giusti stampatore, Milano 1819, III, pp.522-527.
 GONDI, Vita, op. cit., II, p.49; FAINO, Vita, op. cit., p.28: "un bandito, a cui erano stati confiscati li beni per suoi demeriti".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup> LOMBARDI, *Vita, op. cit.*, p.58: "fino ad ottenere a favore di un suo congiunto la liberazione dal bando, e la restituzione di tutti i beni che per certi delitti erangli stati con pubblico decreto recati al fisco"; and n.(c): "poi tanto vile, quanto da alcuni viene descritta".

stiglione "had banished one of her relatives and confiscated his goods".<sup>44</sup> Future research into the archives of the Gonzaga family at Castiglione may lead perhaps to the identification of the man and to the discovery of his wrongdoing.

At any rate, once again Angela had not hesitated to take upon herself an unpleasant mission so that she could help a man in need. And once again, she had won the victory.

What Angela's other "good offices" and other "good works" could have been besides her peace and reconciliation missions seems clear enough when we look at Agostino Gallo's testimony at the "Processo Nazari", 45 which he probably gave with specific episodes and certain people in mind. According to Gallo, people turned to Angela to restore harmony between wife and husband, between children and parents, between brothers, between different kith and kin; he says that her advice was sought in drawing up a will, in establishing new family ties, in facing up to the difficulties of life. Also that Angela used to welcome people, to listen, to suggest; and perhaps she would even settle some dispute and resolve some delicate question. It is not just by chance that Landini will look on Angela as "another Deborah", 46 the prophetess-judge of Israel to whom the people had recourse in matters of justice.

None of her biographers, none of the contemporary witnesses, direct or indirect, no written source and no oral tradition, as far as we know, has put Angela in close contact with the charitable works organised in Brescia, as were the hospitals and other "luoghi pii" for example.

It is not known, therefore, from which source Cistellini got his information when he states that: "Undernourished and neglected children, poor adolescent girls sullied by the privations and by the moral miseries of their hovels and attics, all these will come under Angela Merici's loving care ...".47

We were not able to find any documents proving that Angela had carried out any direct social activity, or that she had "dedicated her life, before and above all else, to the care of the poorest and the most abandoned".<sup>48</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>44</sup> DONEDA, Vita, op. cit., pp.41-42: "aveva bandito un parente di lei e confiscatigli i beni".

<sup>46</sup> D15; cf. Judges, 4:4-5.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup> CISTELLINI Figure, op. cit., p.27: "I bimbi mal nutriti e dimenticati, le povere adolescenti avvizzite dagli stenti e dalle miserie morali nei tuguri e nelle soffitte, avranno le premure di Angela Merici...". <sup>48</sup> As is stated by T. LEDÓCHOWSKA, Angela, op. cit., I, p.78, although in another passage she has acknowledged: "None of the old texts mentions Angela's name as a worker, either in the hospitals, charitable works or centres for catechesis" (Ibid, p.71 et seq.), and this silence is not without reason, as we will try to show later. Cf. infra, Ch.V, Appendix Note.

In no way can we imagine her shut up in her own little world, divorced from the reality of life around her; in the way she accepted and listened to the poor folk who turned to her, inevitably she must have come to know some pitiful cases where a remedy was needed, or some needs which she was able to meet, either directly, or with the help of her friends or of other possible benefactors.

And all this she was moved to do "out of love of God and out of zeal for souls", in the words she herself used in her Second Counsel.

Passing through Venice and Rome, Angela was invited to remain on in those cities for the good of their "luoghi pii". Again it is Romano who affirms this.<sup>49</sup>

One may ask oneself what was the reason behind such an invitation. It must not be forgotten that this was a time when the cities and their lords used to vie with each other for saints, partly for reasons of faith and popular devotion, but much more for reasons of prestige. Some people have managed to discover other determining factors behind this invitation, such as Angela's own "competence" in the field of charitable work and of organisation, and such as "the gifts she exercised in running the Centre of Good Works at Brescia". <sup>50</sup> But we found nothing to support this hypothesis, either in the documentation we consulted, or in the local tradition.

What does stand out very clearly in the general picture of Angela's good works is her readiness to give welcome and spiritual advice, an availability which in no way cut her off from those acts of charity compatible with her state of life, but without favouring any one of them in particular.

### e) The service of the word

Biographers and tradition have always spoken of Angela Merici as being a messenger of peace and truth through her spoken word. And that she indeed did have a fervent and efficacious word, the eyewitnesses affirm it, the hagiographers with good reason repeat it, and her daughters have claimed it, as it were, as their inheritance, to be assimilated, used and handed on.

Cozzano, in the *Dichiarazione della Bolla*,<sup>51</sup> is the first to underline, with full knowledge of the facts, the fecundity of Angela's spoken word.

51 D24, [ff.974r-v; 975r].

<sup>49</sup> Processo Nazari, D16.

<sup>50</sup> LEDÓCHOWSKA, Angela, op. cit., I, p.73. For this subject, refer to Ch.V, 3.

Recalling the origins of the Company of St Ursula, he relates that Angela, in the midst of the first virgins, "was like a sun that gave light to all the others. She was like a fire, a conflagration of love, that set them alight. She was like a throne for God, which instructed them ...". "And even the most sinful received the greatest kindness from her; if she could not succeed in converting such a person, at least she tried by her gentle love to persuade him to do a little good, or a little less evil.... Her words were ardent, powerful and gentle, and spoken with so much grace that everyone was compelled to say: 'God is here'". ".52

A word, therefore, inspiring good works, spoken with the conviction of faith; such a word must have betrayed Angela's heartfelt passion for souls: "O, a fiery desire cried out in our Mother, such as proceeds purely from the Holy Spirit, O, this burning desire cried out, I say: please God that the whole world may come under the shadow of this rule. Pure was this desire, stripped of all human feelings. And so it could only have had its origin in truth". 53 It was a word of truth, harmonising completely with the feeling behind it.

Romano recalls at the "Processo Nazari" that no sooner had the renown of Angela's sanctity begun to spread, than the people had recourse

to her, entreating her prayers.

Gallo is more precise. First of all he pays homage to Angela's personal charm. With the kindness of her words, not only does she win over the entire Gallo family, but also the courtiers of Duke Francesco Sforza II and the Milanese nobility who had taken refuge at Cremona. A good psychologist – as is shown in the *Counsels* and *Legacies* – Angela must have been gifted with an instinctive tact which put the interlocutor at ease. The love of God, which gave purpose to her life, made her direct all her actions towards God's glory through the good she did to those who approached her.

People of all kinds flocked to her during the months she spent in Agostino Gallo's house, and the same thing must have happened when she was living at Romano's. Folk came bringing their various cases to her, and derived comfort and counsel from her judgment and her under-

standing.

Such a one was Ippolita Gallo, who used to visit Angela even when her husband was alive, and when she became a widow she found support in this simple, serene friendship. Earlier, Caterina Patengola had experienced the same kind of thing, when she had found a solace to her own loneliness in Angela's presence.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid

<sup>53</sup> Epistola, D22, [f.963v].

But the most famous act of comfort is linked to the name of Francesco Sforza II. Again it is Romano who recalls it.

Past bitterness and defeats weighed heavily on the son of Ludovico il Moro and Beatrice d'Este. Born in 1495, at the age of eight he had seen his father's court broken up and his father taken prisoner. After that he had suffered a long exile, then his brother's despotism under the humiliating protection of the Swiss, and again another exile. Finally, on 4 April, 1522, he had entered Milan "to the cheers of all the people, with the ringing of bells, the firing of guns; it was as if it was the end of the world". But after this the Spanish and the French had been in dispute over his city; it had been taken, lost, decimated by the plague of 1524, and captured again. When the Spanish troops entered there in July 1525, Milan was exchanged for Como. Como, however, had repulsed Duke Sforza, refusing to open its gates to him. And so had begun a sorrowful pilgrimage for the unfortunate man. Taking refuge in Crema in August and September 1525, he had been given the city of Cremona by the Venetians and their allies, and had established his court there.

Nazari, in his Vita,<sup>56</sup> says that Francesco Sforza had come to Brescia in 1528, and this view is shared by Odorici<sup>57</sup> and by the contemporary Brescian, Bartolomeo Palazzo,<sup>58</sup> who gives the 26 June as the exact date. The Duke had been given hospitality by the Hermits of St Augustine who at that time lived in the convent of San Barnaba, and he had stayed a month with them. During his stay there he had asked to see the woman whose renown for sanctity had reached him.

Angela, who had the rare gift of reaching out to human grief, had accepted the invitation with that humble and intelligent simplicity which enabled her to adapt herself to all those who spoke to her. Knowing how "the resplendent face" of God satisfies every afflicted heart, 59 she must have drawn words of hope and comfort from this assurance. And

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>54</sup> For a chronicle which conserves the flavour of the period: GIANMARCO BURIGOZZO MERZARO, *Cronica Milanese dal 1500 al 1544 con note*, Milano, presso la Libreria Ferrario, Contrada S. Margherita, N.1106, 1851, and ANTONIO GRUMELLO pavese, *Cronaca* su testo a penna esistente nella Biblioteca del signor Principe Emilio Barbiano di Belgioioso. Pubblicata per la prima volta dal prof. Giuseppe Müller, Milano, Francesco Colombo Librajo editore, Contrada S. Martino, N.549A, 1856. PIETRO VERRI, *Storia di Milano*, t.II. ... nella Stamperia di Giuseppe Marelli, Milano, 1798. ALESSANDRO VISCONTI, *Storia di Milano*, Ceschina 1937.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>55</sup> GRUMELLO, *Cronaca, op. cit.*, p.291: "con allegria di tutto il popolo, con suonar de campane, sparar de artellaria, parendo ruinasse el mondo".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>57</sup> FEDERICO ODORICI, *Storie Bresciane dai primi tempi sino all'età nostra*, narrate da Federico Odorici, vol.IX, 1400-1550, Brescia, Pietro di Lor. Gilberti, 1860, p.184.

<sup>58</sup> BARTOLOMEO PALAZZO, Diario, op. cit., p.335.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>59</sup> Cf. D1, Ch.V.

the Duke had begged her "to accept him as a son, together with all his subjects". Some time afterwards, on her way home from a pilgrimage to

Varallo, she had paid him a return visit.

Later, Francesco would marry by proxy Christiana of Denmark, but when the young bride made her entry into Milan through the Porta Ticinese, she did not find the Duke there to welcome her. He was waiting for her at the Castle, bent double, leaning on a stick. This was 3 May 1534. The following year, during the night of 2 November, he would die. The two conversations with Angela may have given this man under sentence of a premature death two short, but peace-filled respites.

Angela's historiographers have always laid special stress on the "inner, perceptive scriptural knowledge" that the Holy Spirit bestowed on her, and which found expression in her words of enlightenment when she was talking to preachers and even to theologians. Gallo liked to recall this fact, saying that he had "quite often seen religious, and especially preachers and theologians, coming to ask her the meaning of many passages in the Psalms, the Prophets, the Apocalypse, in fact anything from the Old and New Testament, and they were astounded to hear such expositions issuing from her mouth". Angela, who had never been to school, who "had never learnt Latin letters", as Chizzola did not fail to point out, had such a good grasp of Latin that people were astonished and amazed. She used to give "very beautiful sermons, very learned and spiritual", which sometimes lasted even an hour.

She used to welcome people, listen, give an answer; it was a kind of one-to-one catechesis, adapted to meet the needs of each individual, and at the same time, it was spiritual direction and a human meeting.

After the foundation of the Order of St Ursula for the education of young girls, the figure of St Angela was often shown in pictures surrounded by children listening to her. With perhaps a few exceptions, this image has never had any historical foundation. It was young people and adults who used to visit her at home. Therefore, she can be considered, and rightly so, the spiritual animator of those chosen souls who gathered round her, but she was also this for the simple folk who used to turn to her seeking her aid. To these lay-people of good-will, searching for light or in need of reassurance, open to the demands of the spirit, and engaged sometimes in responsible tasks, as well as to the humble folk, unlettered and illiterate, Angela "used to preach faith in God the Most High".

Processo Nazari, D16.Ibid.

And for her the Most High God was truly the "only life and hope", the "All", the "only treasure", but he was also "his divine Majesty", the "Spouse" in whose destiny as redeemer and in whose interests as sovereign of the world she wanted to share. Hence her burning desire to lead sinners back to him or to guide new friends to him.

This desire found expression in her persuasive and encouraging words. Gallo, recalling the stay at Cremona, would say later: "People could see that she persuaded many to change their way of living; I myself have known many of them who are now dead, and a few others who are still alive, in Milan as well as in Cremona".62

Angela's conversations, which went straight to the heart of the matter, would spark off the conversion and the vocation of a young man from Salò, Stefano Bertazzoli. According to Bellintani, she had met him during the course of one of the visits she used to pay there from time to time. And she, who knew how to give an "apostolic" dimension to all her actions (understood here in the sense of a direct evangelisation), had obtained from him such a change of direction that he would bear the marks of it for the rest of his life.

Cistellini<sup>64</sup> places the meeting between 1516-1520. But at that epoch Stefano was only in his late teens, judging by the 1565 "polizza d'estimo" in which "Stefano Bertazzuoli de Rossi, a priest at Salò", declares that he is sixty-four years old.65 It is much more likely that the meeting took place some years later, when the young man was a lawstudent at Padua. He had called on Angela, more out of curiosity and vanity than anything else. With a certain colourful detail, Mattia Bellintani has handed down to us a souvenir of this; no doubt it was still being spoken about in his day: "He was studying law at Padua. He had come back to Salò while Angela was staying there and, like many others, went to visit her. Seeing his scarlet cap with a large plume through it, as was the custom of the day, she chided him about it. Her lively and warmhearted exhortations so pierced his heart, that on his return to Padua he began studying canon law and became a priest. From that time onwards he never ceased practising Christian and spiritual works, with the greatest fruit; and he persevered in these until he was nearly ninety, when he passed to the blessed life, as one can hope, filled with saintly virtue".66

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> BELLINTANI, Vita, op. cit., BQ, ms.B.VI.30, f.[16v]

<sup>64</sup> CISTELLINI, Figure, op. cit., "Il gruppo spirituale di Salò", p.104.

<sup>65</sup> PE n 17

<sup>66</sup> BELLINTANI, Vita, op. cit., BQ, ms.B.VI.30, f.[16v]: "Studiava egli in legge a Padoa, et venendo a Salò mentre vi era suor Angela, andolla a visitare, come facevano molti: et vedutolo essa con la be-

The conversion, therefore, had been total and lasting. Bertazzoli had then come under the influence of the Theatines; he himself had become a member of some pious association, working very closely with the charitable organisations of Salò. A man of enthusiasm, but restless and irresolute, motivated by high ideals but held back by big doubts, he used to associate with Cajetan of Thiene and Jerome Emiliani, and had corresponded with the priest Scotti and other well-known Theatines, but he had never joined their Institute.

Bellintani tells us about another episode which goes back to Angela's sporadic visits to Salò: "It caused quite a stir. A priest at Salò, who was living with his mistress, used to visit this very fervent servant of Christ every day. And each time she addressed him with pious and passionate arguments, and always in tears he resolved to end the affair. But once he had left Angela, he could no longer bring himself to break the infernal chain which kept him fettered to sin; and so the unhappy man, scorning so great a grace, finally died in his sin, with the mistress still in his house".67

This failure of Angela, told very simply, bears witness to Bellintani's honesty and to his desire to tell the truth.

Gondi and Faino<sup>68</sup> also make reference to a written "word", saying that Angela used to reply with great prudence to the letters she received, but they do not advance any evidence to support such a statement. It is certainly a very surprising assertion, because no-one else has ever mentioned this fact, and no-one has ever spoken about Angela as being in correspondence with anyone.

During the process of canonisation it was laid down, by a decree from the Holy See, that any writing, letter or document which referred to Angela Merici had to be presented to the ecclesiastical tribunal. Among all the various material collected together, no letter written by her or addressed to her was found, with the exception of the letter of the Sacred Penitentiary concerning her burial.<sup>69</sup>

retta di scarlatto, et con una gran piuma dentro, che all'hora si usava, lo riprese di ciò, et con le sue vive et calde essortationi si fattamente lo punse al cuore, ch'egli, ritornato a Padoa, si pose a studiare in Canonico, et si fece prete: essercitandosi poi sempre solo in opere christiane, et spirituali, con frutto grandissimo; nel che è perseverato insin'all'età presso di novant'anni, nella quale è passato, colmo di sante virtù, alla beata vita, come sperar si puote".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>67</sup> *Ibid*: "Fu bene un gran'caso che, trovandosi in Salò un sacerdote concubinario, ogni giorni andava a visitare questa ferventissima serva di Christo; et facendogli essa ogni volta divoti et caldi ragionamenti, egli sempre in lagrime tutto si risolveva. Ma, da lei partito, non si sapeva poi risolvere a spezzare l'infernal catena, la quale nel peccato legato lo teneva; talché il misero, ingrato a tanta gratia, finalmente morì nell'iniquità sua con la concubina in casa".

<sup>68</sup> GONDI, Vita, op. cit., p.27; FAINO, Vita, op. cit., p.26.

<sup>69</sup> D9.

A few days after Angela's death, Pandolfo Nassino entered in the pages of his *Registro* a testimony from which we would like to quote a couple of lines which have an epigraphical incisiveness and force: "This Madre Suor Angela used to preach faith in God the Most High to everyone, so that she drew them all to herself".<sup>70</sup>

With his usual confidence as an eye-witness, Nassino tells us that the funeral took place with as much solemnity and with as many people as if it had been for a lord. "I saw this myself, Pandolfo". Those words "she used to preach faith to everyone" summed up perhaps the comments which Nassino had heard in the streets and made his own.

"Mistress of the word" – "ore magistra" – would also be the words used by a certain Don Valeriano, Canon of the Lateran, to describe Angela in his epitaph dictated for her. He even concluded a second one with the words: "sic facite ut docui; mortua adhuc doceo".<sup>71</sup>

It is largely by following Romano that we have tried to show what were some of the "good works" carried out by Angela, the ones which have now become part of her history. It is clear that Romano was relying mainly on his memory for them, without presenting them in any fixed order. But when these scattered episodes are set against the background of her daily life as depicted by Gallo in his testimony at the "Processo Nazari", one sees emerging a picture of Angela's activity as a whole, a multiform activity carried out in the service of love.

71 NAZARI, Vita, D17.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>70</sup> NASSINO, Registro, op. cit., f.302r: "Questa Madre sur Anzola a tutti predicava la fede del sumo Dio, che tutti se innamorava di lei".

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# Chapter V THE PILGRIMAGES

So here is Angela finally settled in Brescia, having now reached mature age. It is during this period that her main pilgrimages to the Holy Land and to Rome took place, as well as the shorter ones to Mantua and to Varallo.

The pilgrimages, like fasts, are practices deeply rooted in the oldest religious tradition; in ancient times, there were even pilgrims at the temple of Aesculapius and the tomb of Abraham. Pilgrimages can be said to symbolize the precarious existence of man wandering on earth, ever mindful that here he has no abiding dwelling-place, and throwing himself into a constant search for his "ubi consistam". The pilgrimage is like an interpretation of the human parabola arching its way towards the divine – the sacred place, the heavenly Jerusalem – where, through purification, man is reborn to a new life, and given a new strength to take up again, with a renewed spirit, the rhythm of daily life which is the lot of mankind.

Two dimensions, the devotional and the penitential, characterised these journeys which, notwithstanding the exhausting conditions under which they were carried out, did not fail to exercise a real attraction. The pilgrimage, in a group more or less large, used to strengthen the community bond, a very strong factor in religious sentiment. And then on the return from the pilgrimage, the ordeals endured were transfigured as they were recalled, and this evocation brought back the emotions connected with them. The prospect of the indulgences which could be gained, and which carried so much weight in the religious climate of the time, spurred on the hardy to set out on the journey. The goals of the major pilgrimages were Jerusalem and Rome, St James of Compostella, St Martin of Tours and Cologne. Any others were generally considered to be minor pilgrimages.

Usually enveloped in a simple cloak and with a large-brimmed hat tied under the chin, haversack slung on the shoulder, staff in the hand and with the indispensable water-bottle, the pilgrim used to ask the priest to bless his belt before leaving, and then he would commit himself to the slow means of transport, risking the insecurity of the roads and the inclemency of the elements. He used to find hospitality in the religious houses, in the house of some good Christian or in the inns that he came across on the journey.

In expiation for their sins, big sinners sometimes had a pilgrimage imposed on them as a penance. They used to travel armed with penitential letters which they had to present to the ecclesiastical authorities of the places indicated. These letters not only served as a safe conduct, but they also made it possible for a check to be made, on the return, to see if all the required obligations had been carried out.

As for the reasons behind Angela's pilgrimages, one can assume that she was drawn to them out of devotion to the Passion and the Blood of Christ, and also out of veneration for the Saints and Martyrs of the Church, taking upon herself all the consequences arising out of the journey and adapting herself to the circumstances just like any other simple pilgrim.

We will deal first with Angela's two main pilgrimages, to Jerusalem and to Rome, and then we will follow her on her journeys to Mantua and to Varallo.

There is a striking similarity between some events that happened on the first of these journeys and certain events of a voyage undertaken at the same time, under very similar conditions, an account of which we discovered in a chronicle of the period, thereby removing any doubt that may have existed up to now about the credibility of the first account. In addition, we are now able to provide some completely new information, which is very useful in helping us to understand certain aspects of Angela's stay in Venice.

This chapter is followed by an appendix about a possible link Angela may have had with the movement of the "Divino Amore" and with the "luoghi pii".

### 1. IN THE HOLY LAND

# 1. Towards the Holy Places

The journey appears to have taken place in 1524. Romano himself,<sup>1</sup> Angela's first companion in her travels and adventures, and then later a witness at the "Processo Nazari", does not seem to be very certain about

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> We will be referring in this chapter to the testimonies of the *Processo Nazari*, D16, without repeating this reference each time.

the date. It also seems that the initiative came from him. He had a great desire to go to the Holy Land – prompted by a spirit of adventure or by a deep religious spirit? A little of both probably. He had spoken about the idea to Angela, who had immediately expressed a desire to accompany him.

From Romano's account of this journey, we know quite a lot about the various things that happened on the way, and some of the details mentioned by him are to be found in other accounts of the period, at least by analogy. But as Romano was not writing as a historian, a strictly accurate reconstruction of the pilgrimage remains, and probably will remain, impossible.

The voyage used to start off from Venice, because every year the Serenissima fitted out a "pilgrim ship" to go to the Holy Land, and this was done with the consent of the Grand Turk. For Catholics in the West, this ship represented the freedom to go the Holy Sepulchre, by then under the power of the Crescent.

It was a concession which the Egyptian Sultan had granted the Republic of Venice in 1510. Following its subjugation of the whole region in 1517, the Ottoman Empire had sanctioned this legal situation, which involved some acquired, and by now traditional, advantages.<sup>2</sup> The Turks, however, infested the seas and constituted a permanent danger.

We searched for some additional information about these journeys in the *Diari* of Marin Sanudo the Younger, a Venetian noble who, with the conscientiousness of a diplomat and the attention to detail of a chronicler, used to write down daily comments about events in the city and what was happening in the Venetian Republic, on land and on sea. His fifty in-folio volumes collect together items of news of varied importance and have brought to light letters and documents of an official nature, from the last years of the 15th century to 1535. These entries, sometimes given in minute detail, provide an inexhaustible and extremely useful source of information when it comes to a reconstruction of background, customs and events.

We have gone through some of these volumes to see if there were any clues which might help us to fix the date of the pilgrimage more accurately, since Romano seemed to be a little uncertain as to the exact date.

So we started from 1522. That year, according to Sanudo's ac-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Cf. F. Rey, La protection diplomatique et consulaire dans les échelles du Levant, Larose, 1899, quoted in PAUL DUDON, Saint-Ignace de Loyola, 3e édition, G. Beauchesne et Fils, Paris 1934, p.107.

<sup>3</sup> SANUTO, I Diari, op. cit., t.XXXIII, c.298.

count, was marked by one particular circumstance: right up to the last moment there was uncertainty as to whether or not the "pilgrim ship" would be fitted out, for fear of the Turks. It was the year when Suleiman the Magnificent, who had already crossed the Balkans and conquered Belgrade, took possession of Rhodes and drove out the Knights who had been there since the beginning of the 14th century. Travelling by sea

presented grave risks and dangers, besides those of the pirates.

It was already 14 June and the delay in starting the preparations continued. Sanudo notes that "nostri di colegio andavano lentamente a compir di armar le galee". On the 18th, the eve of Corpus Christi, in other words, of the day set aside for the solemn procession which accompanied the pilgrims as they made their way to the ship, no reassuring news had yet arrived from the sea, and so the fitting out of the ship was discontinued. Given the small number of those going, it was finally decided that it was not worth the effort to organise the voyage to Jaffa. So the pilgrims had had to find for themselves a private means of transport: "Da mar niuna nuova era, unde si stava suspesi e non si continuava lo armar. Ma per esser poco numero di pelegrini per andar in Hierusalem, zercha 40 in tutto è venuti e non più, questo anno non si mete nave al viazo dil Zaffo, perché la spexa nol porta; unde ditti pelegrini hanno nolizzato uno maran di sier Matio de Prioli... col qual voleno andar; ma anderano mal sicuri". 4

Thus, on 19 June, the customary Corpus Christi procession had

taken place, with about forty pilgrims participating.

Now Romano, in his turn, explains that he had learnt, shortly before the usual time of departure, that the annual pilgrimage would not be taking place. Although he does not give any reasons for it, one is inclined to believe that it was a precautionary measure against the dangers from the Turks and so, given the coincidence of the delay referred to in the two accounts, we could perhaps accept 1522 as the probable date.

But if we consider the fact that Romano clearly affirms having travelled on the Venetian ships bound for the Middle East by the usual sea-route, and not on a single private boat, then we must exclude the

year 1522.

As for the 1523 pilgrimage, it would go down in history for a special reason: among the small party of travellers there was Ignatius of Loyola, and his biographers have given a faithful account of the vicissitudes of the journey, together with the names of his travelling companions. Once again there was no pilgrim ship that particular year; in view

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Ibid., c.310.

of the poor demand, a halt had been called to getting it ready. Those who were still hoping to leave were too few to afford to hire another: "Fo pochissimi pelegrini, né pono andar al peregrinare per esser pochi,

né poleno nolezar nave".5

There was, though, a vessel all ready to go to Cyprus with the governor of that island, and the pilgrims had been invited to take advantage of this. Corpus Christi fell on 4 June, but the ship could not hoist its sails until 15 July because of the sea conditions. Ignatius had been granted free berth. A little later, however, a galley had been equipped to take thirteen passengers. On arriving at Crete it had taken on board the group of pilgrims, and the voyage had continued with them all together. The eye-witnesses who give this account make no mention at all of Angela's being present. Thus, 1523 cannot be considered as a likely date.

1525 must also be excluded, it seems, as this was the year of the Jubilee, and it was probably at that time that Angela went to Rome, together with the other pilgrims who were converging there to gain the

indulgences.

For a different reason, we think that 1526 also must be excluded. Antonio Romano states that Angela went to Rome after the pilgrimage to the Holy Land. If this had taken place in 1526, the pilgrimage to Rome would have been in 1527, the same year as the tragic Sack of Rome, and her biographers would certainly have mentioned it.

Putting together all these reasons, we are thus inclined to accept

1524, the date put forward by Romano.

That year, spring had had more than its fair share of bad weather. On Ascension Day the Doge had not been able to go out in the state barge for the ceremony of his marriage with the sea because of the galeforce wind, and he had put it off to the following Sunday: "A dì 5 [May], fo il giorno della Sensa. Fo gran vento, adeo il Doxe deliberò di non andar in bucintoro a sposar il mar, ma venir in chiexia a messa e dar il pasto e la comedia, e poi domenega andarà, si'l sarà bon tempo...".6 And the author continues: "A dì 8 domenega, la matina el Principe fo in bucintoro a sposar il mar, che il dì di la Sensa non si poté andar per il gran vento e pioza...".7

The rains had likewise hampered the army from marching: on 6 May "lo esercito non si havia potuto mover perché per le pioze state, le

acque eran molto cressute, adeo non poteano passar...".8

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, t.XXXIV, c.239.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., t.XXXVI, c.305.
7 Ibid., c.313.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, c.313. <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, c.333.

And so, in that year 1524, Romano had suggested going on the pilgrimage to the Holy Land. But word had then reached him that the Venetian pilgrim ship would not be leaving, and so he had decided to set out for Lanciano, where he had some business to arrange. This flourishing trading centre, about thirty kilometres to the south of Pescara, used to attract an extraordinary throng of people<sup>9</sup> to its annual May fair. Merchants and buyers used to come there not only from Italy, but also from France and the Balkans. An Adriatic port, Lanciano was easy to reach by sea from Venice, and this was precisely the route Romano had chosen.

His journey to Venice could have taken place between April and May, because he arrived there in time to learn that the pilgrimage to the Holy Land would be taking place after all. In fact, no sooner had he arrived in Venice, than Antonio had seen hoisted the white standards with the red cross of the ships which were preparing to sail to the Middle East. He had ensured that the news reached Angela, and she had set out. She had begged ser Bartolomeo, son of her uncle Biancoso de Bianchi, to accompany her, and together they had covered the miles separating them from Venice. The usual route taken was overland as far as Padua, then by sea to the lagoon. We do not know what means of transport the two cousins used.

Bellintani, at this point, introduces into Merician literature a story which had already become part of tradition: Angela, "in the region of Vicenza, near Montebello, arrived in front of a very swollen torrent, where there was a wooden footbridge, and it was precisely in that dangerous spot that she experienced angelic assistance. At considerable danger, her cousin had crossed over the water on horseback, but while the man who was responsible for the horses and had Angela riding pillion, was wondering what to do, the horse of its own accord, or rather under angelic guidance, moved towards the little footbridge and crossed over it, swift and sure-footed, much better than any courageous man could have done, and reached the other side, to the considerable amazement of everyone".<sup>10</sup>

Pictures have sometimes depicted Angela on horseback while she is crossing over a stream by a narrow footbridge. A prudent scepticism

9 MORONI, Dizionario, op. cit., vol.XXXVII, article "Lanciano", p.92.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> BELLINTANI, *Vita, op. cit.*, BQ, ms.B.VI.30, f.[12r]: "giunta su'l Vicentino presso a Montebello, ad un'acqua molto grossa, ove per li pedoni era un travetto, in questo passo pericoloso provò l'angelica assistenza. Passò il parente l'acqua co'l cavallo con grave rischio, ma mentre il vetturino, che lei menava in groppa, sta pensando che cosa si deggia fare, mossesi da sé il cavallo, anzi dall'angelo condotto verso il pedale et sopra di quello sicuro et ispedito, meglio che si haverebbe un huomo ardito, passò da l'altra parte con non picciola loro meraviglia...".

could lead us to look on this event as being part legend and part exaggeration, but when we read Sanudo's information about the torrential rains of the preceding days, this scepticism could well disappear and give way to admiration.

The decision to go to the Holy Land already pointed to Angela's courageous temperament, to a spirit of daring unusual for those days, and Bellintani's account confirms this.

Angela had arrived in Venice in time to join in the solemn procession which accompanied the pilgrims to the port; this was usually held on the feast of Corpus Christi, which in that particular year fell on 26 May. Romano betrays a certain excitement when he relates: "Immediately I let the Madre Suor Angela know, and straightaway she came to Venice accompanied by a Bartolomeo Biancoso from Salò, her first cousin. And so, on the day of Corpus Christi which followed ... we all embarked ...".

This passage is usually interpreted as if Angela had arrived in Venice on the eve itself of the feast. Romano, however, does not say "the following day", but "the day of Corpus Christi which followed", and so it is impossible to advance any theory as to the exact date of the arrival of Angela and Bartolomeo.<sup>11</sup>

We did not find out any information about the cost of the passage or by what practical means the payment was made, or anything about the necessary food-supplies that had to be obtained before the departure. We only know that, the previous year, the owner of the pilgrim ship had asked each passenger for 50 scudi (or 26 ducats), as is recorded by Ignatius' biographers. We do not know who the ship-owner was in 1524, or how much he charged. In this group of pilgrims, in fact, there was no-one who kept a diary of the voyage, as in the previous year when Pietro Füssli, a bell-maker from Zurich, and Philippe Hagen from Strasburg, had taken note of the provisions made by the passengers and of their itinerary in the Holy Land.

The feast of Corpus Christi had been carried out with its traditional ritual; in a phantasmagoria of colours and lights, and to the singing of sacred hymns, the pilgrims had taken their place in the procession, accompanied by the members of the Council, in the wake of the Doge and the ambassadors.

Antonio Romano mentions the name of "il magnifico Signor Alovigio Justiniano" as one of the escorts, but he must have confused the

 $<sup>^{11}</sup>$  FAINO is mistaken when, in the Vita, op. cit., p.28, he says that Angela left Brescia on 1st June and Salò on the 3rd.

names and the people. There was no Alvise Giustinian, in fact, among those who acted as escorts in the 1524 procession, but there was a "sier Alvise Pisani" and a "sier Andrea Justinian". Romano may have picked up some names here and there and joined them together, or he may have already heard about someone with that name – "Alvise Justinian, provedador a le biave q. sier Marin". This Alvise had held a very high position among the nobility and in the life of the city, but on 10 June 1521 his son Anzolo, "formerly a master of galleys going to the Barbary coast", had been sentenced following a court-case, and Alvise had been implicated in it with his son. He had died shortly after. On 7 March 1522, in fact, two galleys were hired out on contract for the usual journey to the Barbary coast, and it so happened that one of these belonged to "Anzolo Justinian quondam Alvise", creditor of the King of Tunis. Alvise Giustinian had died, therefore, some time between June 1521 and March 1522.

And so on that 26 May 1524, there were fewer than fifty pilgrims. Sanudo seems to imply that they were not very numerous: "Eravi... di soto di pellegrini numero cinquanta, che più non ne sono in questa terra, venuti fino hora".<sup>15</sup>

It is not known where they had spent the days preceding the voyage; there was a well-known Venetian tradition, though, of treating pilgrims as sacred guests, and the Government and the Council used to consider it an honour to facilitate their transactions with the owners of the ships that were sailing. Romano, however, does not seem to have remembered anything in particular about those days. Nor does he say anything about if or how long the galley had had to wait in port until the weather conditions were favourable for weighing anchor.

There is only one halt on the outward voyage which Romano singles out, namely the one made at the port of the Canea on the north-west coast of the island of Crete. Here Angela had lost "almost all her sight". In his *Vita*, Nazari states: "perhaps because of the sea fog, or perhaps because of the tiredness resulting from the journey, she lost nearly all her sight. Nevertheless, although she was as it were blind, she was guided to all the holy places". <sup>16</sup> Bellintani says: "she remained almost entirely bereft of sight". <sup>17</sup> With Nazari and Bellintani, we support Romano who, as an

<sup>12</sup> SANUTO, I Diari, op. cit., t.XXXVI, c.369.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., t.XXX, c.103.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., t.XXXIII, c.21.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., t.XXXVI, c.369.

<sup>6</sup> D17.

<sup>17</sup> BELLINTANI, Vita, in Monumenta, op. cit., p.84.

eye-witness of the whole pilgrimage, seems to imply that it was an eye-infection rather than a total blindness, as suggested by Gallo, Landini and others.

## b) At Jerusalem

According to a well-established tradition, the pilgrimage to the Holy Places usually took place under the guidance of the Franciscans of the Custody of the Holy Land. Only Gallo says something about this particular pilgrimage: Angela "lost her sight going there. Nevertheless she told me that as she was being led from one to another of those holy places of devotion, she always saw them with the eyes of her soul, just as if she had actually seen them. And afterwards, having recovered her sight in Brescia, she went to Rome ...". Nazari, in his *Vita*, perhaps after he had received some later information from Romano, adds that when she arrived at Mount Calvary, the Madre had wept for a long time stretched out on the ground, and had repeatedly kissed the ground. 18

The meditation on Christ's mysteries must have left a deep impression on Angela. The two pilgrimages to Varallo, <sup>19</sup> the frescoes in the oratory of Isabetta Prato, <sup>20</sup> and the numerous references to the Passion in

her Writings, all testify to it.

We can find another testimony to it in the words of Ivan de Calahorra: "At Jerusalem, at the same time [the year is not indicated], another servant of God brought great honour to the monastery of the Tertiary Nuns of Mount Sion; this was Sister Angela from Desenzano [in the original Spanish it is given as 'Sor Angela de Disenzano'] who, afire with the love of God, with great faith and devotion made a pilgrimage to the Holy Places, where with copious tears she adored and meditated on the most sublime mysteries which had been performed there by the Redeemer of the world".<sup>21</sup>

We do not know from which source Ivan de Calahorra took this; in any case, he does not mention Angela's blindness.

The monastery he mentions, not far from that of the Friars of Mount Sion, was intended to "receive women who are continually com-

Venetia, 1694. Cf. Libro V, cap.27, pp.473-474.

<sup>18</sup> D17.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Cf. infra, 5. of this chapter. <sup>20</sup> Cf. infra, Pt.II, Ch.VI, 2.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> P.F. IVAN DE CALAHORRA, Historia cronologica della Provincia di Syria e Terra Santa di Gierusalemme... Opera composta in Spagnolo dal M.R.P.F. Giovanni di Calaorra Min. Osserv. della Provincia di Burgos [stampata a Madrid nel 1684]. Tradotta nella Lingua Italiana dal M.R.P. Angelico di Milano Min. Riformato, essendo attuale Guardiano, e Custode della medesima Provincia di Terra Santa, In

ing to Jerusalem on pilgrimage. These Beguines [the nuns of Mount Sion] are highly honoured and esteemed by the Saracens ... And for this reason they are safe in the mountains of Judea, and throughout the

City ...".22

We know nothing else about the visit to Jerusalem, since Romano has left no testimony about the places visited or about the spiritual aspect of the pilgrimage. However, he appears a little more eloquent in the account of the return journey from Jerusalem. The first stop was at Rama, today er-Ram, a place in Palestine on the route from Jerusalem to Bethel. This stop lasted eight days "on account of certain assassins [armed Moslems] who were waiting to take us prisoners".

This was not the first time that such a thing had happened. The previous year, too, the party in which Ignatius of Loyola was travelling had been forced to stop at Rama, where the city governor, in collusion with the brigands, had demanded one ducat and a garment from each pilgrim in return for letting them leave. They had refused to give in to this exorbitant and unreasonable demand, but they had had to pay for their refusal by being shut up in an infested place for three days, without food and drink, and many of them had fallen ill.<sup>23</sup>

## c) The return

With Romano as our guide, let us go once more through the eventful return journey.

Leaving Jaffa, the pilgrim ship had set sail for Cyprus, where they stayed for several days taking on cargo. From there the next port of call had been Candia. Here, according to Bellintani (Romano does not say anything about it), Angela had recovered her sight in front of a miraculous crucifix.<sup>24</sup> Landini also speaks of a recovery during the return journey.<sup>25</sup> Lombardi, on this subject, discusses the version which, according to Gallo's statement, would have Angela healed at Brescia, but then he resolves the difficulty, like Doneda, by giving his support to the healing which took place during the return journey.<sup>26</sup>

From Candia the pilgrim ship had left on the evening of 4 October,

23 DUDON, Saint Ignace, op. cit., p.116.

25 Estratto, D15.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> FRANCESCO SURIANO, *Opera nuova chiamata Itinerario de Hierusalem*, compilato per P. Francesco Suriano da Venetia dell'Ord. del Serafico Francesco de l'Observantia de la Provincia di Santo Francesco l'anno 1485, stampato in Venetia per Francesco Bindoni l'anno 1524, p.64. quoted in LOMBARDI, *Vita, op. cit.*, p.65, n.(c).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> BELLINTANI, *Vita*, op. cit., BQ, ms.B.VI.30, f.[13r].

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> LOMBARDI, Vita, op. cit., pp.68-69.

the feast of St Francis, in the company of two other ships. According to Romano's account, the passengers had been joined by the "Vice-Duke of Candia", who also was going to Venice.<sup>27</sup>

Having left the island, the three ships, according to the same narrator, had found themselves at the mercy of a raging storm which had lasted nine days; two ships had sunk and the ship with the pilgrims had only managed to escape by throwing overboard the cargo and the munitions. After this it had been blown towards the north African coast of Tunisia.

In that same year, 1524, and during the same days, some other Venetian ships had undergone similar adventures. It is Sanudo who tells the story: on 3 November, the Duke of Candia, returning on a ship belonging to the Dolfins, 28 had disembarked at Venice; he was at the end of his term of office, and had been replaced by Nicolò Zorzi. The ship had set sail from Candia on 12 October and had miraculously escaped three storms. Sanudo continues: "Marco Minio, who had been Duke of Candia and who arrived yesterday with the Dolfin ship, came 'in Collegio'; he had been replaced by Nicolò Zorzi. Marco Minio was dressed in black plush velvet. He was accompanied by Signor Alvise Filetto, Lord High Chancellor of Candia, who had been authorised by the Grand Council to spend ... [sic] months in this land. There was also Francesco Minio, his brother and captain of the above-mentioned Dolfin ship, a vessel of 700 'botte', 29 which had been to Jerusalem with forty-three Flemish pilgrims on board. The boat had left Candia on 12 October, and had had to face three very heavy storms".30

Let us look at these three violent storms mentioned by Sanudo. According to the account of the noblemen from Candia, they had been first of all led astray for two days near the island of Cerigo (ancient Cithera, today Kithara); then two storms had broken out; as a result, the ship, listing badly, had strayed for six days off the coast of Sicily, and then in Tunisian waters. Twenty-nine pilgrims had thrown into the sea the bar-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> In fact, the offices in Candia were those of: duke, governor, rector and directors, and captaingeneral.

The Dolfins were Venetian ship-owners, trading with Tunis.

29 "Botte" is the Italian nautical term used here to indicate the ship's carrying capacity.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> SANUTO, *I Diari*, *op. cit.*, t.XXXVII, c.137: "Vene in Collegio sier Marco Minio, venuto ducha di Candia con la nave Dolfina, zonto eri; in loco dil qual andoe sier Nicolò Zorzi. Questo era vestito di veludo negro con barba. Era con lui domino Alvise Filetto, canzelier grando di Candia, qual à auto licentia in Gran Consejo di venir in questa terra per mexi... Era *etiam* sier Francesco Minio, suo fratello, qual è stato con la ditta nave Dolfina di botte 700, con pelegrini 43 fiamengi, in Hierusalem, et era capitanio di la nave. La qual nave partì di Candia a dì 12 Octubrio, et nel venir à hauto 3 grandissime fortune".

rels of that delicious aromatic wine called malmsey and whose Italian nickname of "grechetto" recalls more clearly its place of origin.

With these barrels, they also had had to throw overboard some other merchandise, and finally they had arrived opposite Durazzo. There they had received on board the visit of a Turkish captain who had drawn close to them with a flotilla of seven fast warships, called "fuste", which had oars and were smaller than galleys. It is true that the Turkish captain had offered them a gift of two carafes and a large goblet, but it is also true that the passengers of the Christian ship had recommended their souls to God and had made vows to him in return for their safety.<sup>31</sup>

Between this adventure and the one experienced by Romano, there are sufficient similarities to reinforce the suspicion that it was the same event which the good "varotaro de Ghedi" evokes in his own epic style, plus some additional details. They had arrived at Durazzo where the Turkish fleet was lying, and the following morning they had been joined by a galley and two fuste, which had been received by the traditional salute. The "patron" or captain of the Christian ship had been conducted to his Turkish counterpart and subjected to an interrogation. Then the Turkish captain had climbed on board the pilgrim ship to greet the Duke, whom he knew already from the time when the latter had been ambassador at the court of Suleiman II. The Turkish boats had then withdrawn some distance from the port to lie in ambush for the pilgrims and to take them prisoners. But the Lord, thanks to Angela's prayers, had come to their aid and had led them to safety.

A third storm, recorded by Sanudo, had broken out in the open sea beyond the island of Lesina. Romano does not remember it. He only recalls their arrival at Cittanova di Schiavonia (Cittanova of Istria or No-

vigrad), a happy arrival due to Angela's intercession.

Romano does not say anything either about the ethnic group to which most of the pilgrims belonged. Those on the 700-ton Dolfin ship, whom Sanudo mentions, were Flemish. Sanudo, on his part, does not mention the shipwreck of the two ships: these could have quite simply lost contact and continued the voyage by different routes, and the pilgrims, who had been driven by the storm into the Sicilian sea, had thought the ships had foundered. This kind of thing often happened at sea. Thus, two years earlier, on 16 November, news had reached Venice

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, t.XXXVII, c.137: "La prima [tempesta] fo a dì 17, che do dì e do notte duroe, di gran vento, mar et pioza; adeo [è la seconda] la nave se ingalonò, et 6 zorni poi andò vagando sora Cicilia; facendo 29 pelegrini butono malvasie e assa' robe in aqua; a la fin si trovono sora Durazo, dove era uno capitano turco con una galeota et 7 fuste; li vene a la nave, li donò do poti et una taza, siché hanno fatto quelli di la nave voti grandissimi, perché credevano esser anegati tutti".

of the sinking of the ship belonging to Francesco and Bartolomeo da Mosto, which was returning from Candia with a cargo of malmsey. But the following day it was learnt that the ship had landed Istria.<sup>32</sup>

Romano makes no reference to any vows taken at the height of the danger; Sanudo, on the other hand, does not fail to relate that, during the voyage, the Lord Chancellor of Candia had made a vow to dress himself in "beretino", that is in grey, for a period of ten years, if he should arrive safe and sound at his destination.<sup>33</sup>

## d) The stay at Venice

If the voyage described by Sanudo in the Diario for 1524 coincides with our pilgrims' one, they would have disembarked at Venice on 3 November.<sup>34</sup>

According to Romano's narrative, the three of them had stayed some time in Venice, simply perhaps to recover from the fatigue and the discomforts of the voyage.

Angela found lodging with the nuns of the Holy Sepulchre, who observed the Franciscan rule. This hospitality constituted a kind exception to their rule; no doubt it had been granted to her in recognition of the habit of the Third Order which she was wearing and which, in a certain sense, made her one of them.

We have here an apparently insignificant fact and yet a very important one for the repercussions it had on the rest of Angela's stay in Venice and on the interpretations arising from it. We can follow its developments thanks to the historical information which we discovered about this very convent and which up to now had escaped the notice of Merician biographers.

The convent of the Holy Sepulchre <sup>35</sup> had been founded with the legacy of a certain Elena, widow of Marco Vioni, with the purpose of welcoming poor women who were going on pilgrimage to Jerusalem, Rome, Compostella or elsewhere, and had to pass through Venice.

On 7 September 1499 the superior, a certain Beatrice Venier (or Veneria) had obtained permission from Pope Alexander VI for the community to adopt the Rule of the Third Order of St Francis, with perpetual enclosure, "ex eo praesertim quod post expugnatam a Turcis Con-

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., t.XXXIII, c.500.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., t.XXXVII, c.137.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., t.XXXVII, c.137.

<sup>35</sup> FLAMINIO CORNER, Notizie Storiche delle Chiese e Monasteri di Venezia e di Torcello, Padova. G. Manfré, 1758; p.118 and pp.272-277.

stantinopolim nulla ferme Venetias peregrinationis causa pauper foemina adventaret".<sup>36</sup>

But the site of the house inherited from Elena Vioni was too restricted for the premises to be enlarged in such a way as to allow for the construction outside the enclosure of some new accommodation for the visitors who were passing through. It was, in fact, hemmed in by the dwellings of the nobility: "propter domorum nonnullorum nobilium propinquitatem". As a result, there was a "magna confusio" because the religious and the visiting pilgrims were all mixed together. This is why the former had turned to the Pope, begging his kind intervention to resolve this anomalous situation which made it difficult for them to observe the regular rule and was an obstacle, rather than a help, to their eternal salvation. Corner writes: "efficacibus verbis ostendentes, quantum ex onere sibi nuper imposito nimis gravarentur, et a regularis vitae exercitio retraherentur, quapropter, cum ex potius animarum pericula, quam salus provenirent".<sup>37</sup>

Flaminio Corner also reports the object of the supplication to Alexander VI: "Vicarius Generalis et Fratres de Observantia rogant Alexandrum VI ut Moniales S. Sepulcri dilatare possint suum monasterium destruendo domos assignatas in hospitium peregrinarum...".38 Thus the project was aimed at enlarging the area of accommodation for the clois-

tered nuns and suppressing the hostel part.

By a Brief dated 8 February 1500, the Pope had granted the community their request, thus safeguarding the cloistered life which the Franciscan nuns had opted for.

Now Romano, continuing his narrative, relates that ladies, gentlemen, religious and pious people, all had made their way to the convent of the Holy Sepulchre to see the tertiary recently returned from the Holy Land, since the pilgrims and passengers considered that they owed their safety to her prayers. Such a throng of people was unbefitting in a setting which had become strictly enclosed. This probably gave rise to a certain embarrassment on both sides, and hence the decision to find alternative accommodation for the Franciscan tertiary.

As in most hospitals, the Hospital for Incurables had a part set aside for visitors. To give lodging to the pilgrims was a corporal work of

36 Ibid., p.277.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> FLAMNIO CORNER, Ecclesiae Venetae Antiquis Monumentis nunc etiam primum editis illustratae ac in decades distributae, Authore Flaminio Cornelio Senatore Veneto. Decadis decimae tertiae pars posterior, Venetiis MDCCXXXXIX - Typis Jo. Baptistae Pasquali Superiorum permissu ac privilegio, t.XI, pp.279-280.

mercy, which met one of the big needs of the time, and especially in a port city situated at the crossroads of the main routes of maritime trade. And so Angela Merici was conducted to this hospital. Jerome Emiliani (or Miani), too, when he arrived in Brescia in 1532, would be given a similar kind of lodging, namely in the Hospital for Incurables.<sup>39</sup>

The Venetian Hospital, which owed its origin to the initiative of Cajetan of Thiene, was still in its early stages. It had been started during the Lent of 1522,40 and by 1524 it consisted of a few houses close together which had already been acquired and a number of wooden buildings. Jerome Emiliani, for his part, had founded a "luogo pio" for orphans in the St Basil district, which he maintained from his own resources.41

The conversations exchanged between Angela and her visitors in the convent parlour and in the rooms of the hospital must have very soon revealed the moral worth of this woman, her human qualities, the compelling force of her words. The story told by the returning pilgrims had endowed her with a certain aura of sanctity: she had become almost blind, and then she had been healed; she had prayed throughout the storm-tossed voyage, and then the ship had been saved from shipwreck and from the danger of the Turks; her faith in God had inspired confidence in the crew and the passengers. Why not keep her in Venice where her word and the radiant influence of her sanctity could do so much good among all those sheltered in the city's charitable institutions?

And so, they had "begged her to remain in Venice for the general good of the 'luoghi pii' of that Illustrious City". It is Romano who gives this information, making the invitation look as if it was the outcome of the favourable opinion which the nobility had expressed about Angela's

sanctity.

There may also have been another minor contributory factor. It is known, for example, that poor pilgrims, passing through the hospices maintained at public expense, used to repay them by rendering some service. Angela had probably done this, with tact and solicitude, and this also could have played a role in the invitation.

Moreover, the directors of the Hospital for Incurables already had it in mind to look for some helpers. This can be deduced, on good grounds, from the fact that an Apostolic Brief of 19 May 1525 by Clem-

40 SANUTO, I Diari, op. cit., t.XXXIII, c.103.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> NASSINO, Registro, op. cit., f.288. Jerome Emiliani, a Venetian noble (1481-1538), founded the Clerks Regular called the Somaschans.

<sup>41</sup> EMANUELE ANTONIO CICOGNA, Inscrizioni nella Chiesa e nell'Ospitale degli Incurabili, in Dell'inscrizioni veneziane, vol.V, Venezia, Orlandelli 1853, p.368.

ent VII gives permission to this Venetian hospital to become affiliated to the Roman one and – what is of greater interest to us – to find four religious, two men and two women, to carry out the works of charity

and other appropriate activities.42

In the climate of enthusiasm stirred up by Jerome Emiliani and his first followers, the presence of a woman animated by the Spirit of God, free of family ties and gifted with intelligence, understanding and a persuasive tongue, could render an invaluable service in this "luogo pio". Angela declined the invitation and, fearing the intervention of the Patriarch, who at that time was Antonio Contarini, she arranged with her two travelling companions to return immediately to Brescia. Romano

makes it sound like a flight.

The journey from Venice to Brescia, given the time of the year, was probably made in a closed carriage. Making allowance for a few stops at some inn or convent, they finally reached Brescia on 25 November, a Friday. On that day, the Church was celebrating the feast of St Catherine of Alexandria, virgin and martyr, who was well known to Renaissance Christians through devotion, art and legend. And St Catherine would have a special place in the history of the Company of St Ursula, as is confirmed also in the *Secondo Libro Generale*: "The good and saintly custom of celebrating the final acceptance of the virgins into the Company of St Ursula on the feast of St Catherine each year, was introduced as much in memory of the happy return of the Blessed Angela from Jerusalem to Brescia on this very day and because she gave birth, to this holy Company on that day (in the year 1535), as to encourage these virgins to imitate St Catherine who (so the stories go) was espoused to Christ Our Lord, and by his own hands".<sup>43</sup>

And it was in terms of nuptial relationship that Angela would define the "new life" which she proposed to the virgins of the Company of St Ursula, probably concealing beneath this apparently banal expression

her own spiritual experience.

42 Memorie Antiche estratte dal Catastico degli Incurabili, pp.43-49, quoted in CICOGNA, Inscrizioni,

op. cit., p.310.

<sup>43</sup> Secondo Libro Generale, f.100: "La buona et santa consuetudine di stabilir le virgini nella Compagnia di santa Orsola, nella festa di santa Catherina ogn'anno, è sta introdotta sì per memoria del felice ritorno che fece la beata Angela da Gierusalemme in Brescia in questo istesso giorno, et perché diede principio (in tal giorno l'anno 1535) a questa devota Compagnia, sì ancora per excitar queste virgini all'imitatione di santa Catherina, quala (come dicono le historie) fu sposata con le proprie mani da Christo signor nostro".

#### 2. AT ROME

There is no doubt at all that the pilgrimage to Rome took place, but with regard to the date, the itinerary and duration, there is uncertainty because no-one has left us any direct testimony about them.

A tradition, of unknown origin, places it in the Jubilee Year, 1525. Antonio Romano says vaguely: "some time later", in other words, some

time after the return from Jerusalem.

Faino is the first who, without any hesitation, says the reason for the journey is "the occasion of the Holy Year", 44 and this phrase is literally repeated by Doneda. 45 The latter, however, explains his own preference for 1525 on the twofold grounds of the attraction of the indulgences attached to the pilgrimage and of the display of the relics which took place in the Holy City on such an occasion. 46 He supports this hypothesis by what he thinks is a further piece of evidence: "And seeing that the idea of making the same journey also occurred to two Priests, this confirms me in my opinion; furthermore, I do not think it would have been very opportune to have made this pilgrimage in any of the following three years, owing to the turmoils of war which were raging throughout Italy, and especially in the City of Rome and in the Papal States". 47

The second reason advanced by Doneda seems to us the more cogent one, namely, that the disorders and the wars of the period following 1525 would have made a long journey through the Peninsula almost impossible. The argument about the participation of the two priests in the journey does not seem to us to be very convincing.

Both Faino 48 and Lombardi 49 think that some other pilgrims would have accompanied the three going to Rome, and this view is likely, since the general conditions and the danger of falling into the hands of brigands made it inadvisable for people to travel in too small

a group.

Even if Romano's expression "some time later" does not give a precise chronological indication, at least it gives a sequence of facts: first Jerusalem, then Rome.

46 Ibid., p.140, n.26.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>44</sup> FAINO, *Vita*, op. cit., p.33. <sup>45</sup> DONEDA, *Vita*, op. cit., p.47.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p.141: "E mi conferma nell'opinione il vedere che ancora a due Sacerdoti entrò allora nell' animo di fare lo stesso viaggio; oltre che non mi pare, che alcuno dei tre seguenti anni fosse molto opportuno al detto pellegrinaggio, attesi i tumulti di guerra per l'Italia, e specialmente nella Città di Roma e nello stato Ecclesiastico".

FAINO, Vita, op. cit., p.33.
 LOMBARDI, Vita, op. cit., p.73.

This time, however, Antonio Romano did not accompany Angela, which is a pity, as it means we have no information at all about what happened on the long journey, about its penitential aspect or the misadventures which probably befell them. And these were frequent at that time: bandits used to infest the roads, robbing the pilgrims of all their possessions, sometimes even taking their lives; and in addition, the problems in finding food and lodging used to give the travellers considerable trouble. It is not even known if the stages of the journey were covered on horseback by the men and in a carriage by the women, as was the custom of wealthy pilgrims going to Rome, or on foot, as was the lot of the poor, dragging their baggage behind them. Nor is it known if the party was escorted by armed men, as was often the case.

That particular year the influx of pilgrims to Rome was small compared with that of previous jubilees. Moroni points this out: "Only a small number of pilgrims came to this Jubilee on account of the plague which was afflicting the city of Rome, the wars in Italy, the rebellions in Germany, the revolts in Hungary, and especially on account of Luther's

furious heretical attack against indulgences".50

But what Romano does throw light on is the devotional aspect of Angela's Roman pilgrimage. She had desired "to visit those very holy relics", and on her return she had spoken about "many things concerning those very holy relics". In a way it was like going against the stream in

support of a practice vigorously challenged by Lutheranism.

The cult of the relics of saints and martrys was flourishing at that time. During the Jubilee Year, in particular, large crowds were powerfully attracted to the exposition of the "Sacred Face", that is, the veil of Veronica, every Friday and feast day in St Peter's, and also to that of the heads of St Peter and St Paul every Saturday in the Lateran. Then there was the pilgrimage from church to church, from catacomb to catacomb, where relics in large numbers could be seen. For the pilgrim, therefore, life followed a rhythm based on the sacred; he felt as if he was totally immersed in the sacred. The pilgrimage was not just a ritual expression, but an intense existential experience.

The meeting with the world of the spirit was stimulated in particular by the ascetical exercise involved in visiting the basilicas. At the be-

MORONI, Dizionario, op. cit., vol.II, article "Anno Santo", p.117: "A questo Giubileo concorse poco numero di pellegrini a cagione della peste che afflisse la città di Roma, delle guerre d'Italia, delle ribellioni della Germania, de' tumulti dell'Ungheria, e specialmente a motivo dell'eresia di Lutero furiosamente scagliatasi contro le indulgenze"; VIRGINIO PRINZIVALLI, Gli Anni Santi, Roma, 1924, pp.63-69; G. CASTELLI, Gli Anni Santi, Cappelli, Bologna 1949, pp.91-94; M. CAPODICASA, I Papi degli Anni Santi, Pescara 1975, pp.87-92.

ginning, in order to gain the Jubilee indulgences, one had to visit the basilicas of St Peter and St Paul, but very soon those of St John Lateran and St Mary Major had been added on. Except in cases of absolute necessity, such as the overcrowding which impeded movement, or the recrudescence of some plague epidemic, the visits to the four basilicas had to be made for thirty days, consecutive or otherwise, if the pilgrims were Romans, for fifteen days if they lived elsewhere in the Italian Peninsula, and for eight days if they came from beyond the Alps.

Angela must have remained in Rome, therefore, for at least two whole weeks, taking lodgings, as the others did, in one or other of the hospices assigned for this purpose, or in someone's private house.

It was during the course of this pilgrimage that she was seen and recognised by one of the Chamberlains of His Holiness, in other words by one of the dignitaries of the Pontifical Court: Piero Della Puglia was thus in a favourable position to obtain permission for Angela to be admitted to the Pope's presence. Messer Piero Della Puglia had known Angela on the occasion of the pilgrimage to Jerusalem: "He had made the journey with us", Romano would say, and Nazari, in his *Vita*, would write that "he had made the voyage to the Holy Land on the same boat".<sup>51</sup>

There is no detail whatever about the audience; Romano just notes that Angela was allowed to kiss the foot of His Holiness. He adds, though, that the Pope "begged her to consent to remain at Rome in the 'luoghi pii' there; but with very humble words she excused herself and took her leave. That same evening she left Rome, fearing that His Holiness might compel her to remain there out of holy obedience, and returned to Brescia".

At this point a question spontaneously arises: Is this second "flight" authentic or is it just Romano superimposing on Angela a kind of code of behaviour when there are similar situations? Even more so as, when she was in Venice, Angela had been among her own people, as it were, with her cousin Bartolomeo and the faithful Romano, whereas at Rome she had gone with strangers, probably one of a group, and it would have been awkward, at the very least, to impose a sudden departure on the whole group. Without mentioning the fact that no-one would have wanted to break off the cycle of visits laid down for gaining the Jubilee, and so forfeit the right to the promised indulgences, after having endured the risks of such a long and tiring journey. The "flight", therefore, does not appear very likely. Moreover, none of the early biographers

(Nazari, Bellintani, Gondi, Faino, Doneda) relates this particular detail,

not even as a hypothesis.

As for Nazari, in his *Vita* (and here again we wonder if he had not, by any chance, tried to check the details of the episode by questioning Romano or others about them later on), he writes that Angela, "excusing herself with very humble words (because she had it in mind to establish the devout Rule of St Ursula, in other words the congregation of the Virgins, which she later did), took her leave of His Holiness with his kind permission and returned to Brescia, all jubilant at having venerated those holy Relics".

And this version seems more likely to us than the "flight".

#### 3. THE INVITATIONS TO REMAIN

According to the most widespread and generally accepted Merician tradition, Venice, Rome, and for some authors even Milan, are stages bracketed together because in each of these cities, the same kind of episode was repeated: Angela was invited to stay on. Then, with the passage of time, these simple invitations were examined to find out the possible reasons behind them. They were even seen as an offer made to Angela to become involved in organising or directing the kinds of activities connected with the "luoghi pii".

It all goes back to the account of Antonio Romano, who had been an eye-witness during Angela's stay in Venice, but not at Rome or at Milan. We will see how his story evolved over the centuries, setting out

first a clear statement of the three initial incidents.

## a) The oldest testimonies

Let us summarise the three invitations mentioned by Romano:

- At Venice: Angela was transferred from the monastery of the Holy Sepulchre to the Hospital for Incurables. The nobles of the city, appreciating her sanctity, begged her to remain "for the general good of the 'luoghi pii' of that illustrious City". In his Vita, Nazari adds one further point: those who invited Angela to remain were the "Illustrious Gentlemen supervisors of the Luoghi Pii". As Angela was a guest of a "luogo pio" at that particular time, it was only natural that this gesture should come from those in charge of the house. For fear that the Patriarch

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

might intervene compelling her to stay, Angela had preferred to leave the city that same evening.

- At Rome: Romano was not present here; he had simply heard the story of the episode from the person concerned herself: Clement VII had begged Angela to remain at Rome in the "luoghi pii" there, but she had taken her leave and left the same evening for Brescia. Regarding this matter we have already seen that Nazari in the Vita speaks about a return to Brescia "with the kind permission of the Pope".<sup>53</sup>
- At Milan: Here also, Romano was not present. According to his testimony, the Duke had simply asked Angela to remain in his city, but she had excused herself and had left.

Landini <sup>54</sup> makes no reference to these three events. Bellintani, on the other hand, relates that "she arrived at Venice and the rays of her sanctity soon spread in that large City ... Moreover, seeing how prudent she was, the Gentlemen supervisors of the Luoghi Pii entreated her to remain there for the good of those same places". <sup>55</sup> And then at Rome – still following Bellintani, who takes care not to omit the detail that Angela had "made the visits at leisure" – the Pope "received her with great kindness and spoke to her, urging her to remain in Rome; but she, knowing what she had to carry out by divine command, humbly excused herself, and with the papal permission and blessing, returned to Brescia". <sup>56</sup> But when Bellintani says that on her way to Milan, Angela had visited, consoled and given edification to Duke Sforza, he does not add that she had been invited by him to remain. <sup>57</sup>

Gondi in his turn relates: "Some Gentlemen and noble Ladies who were visiting her observed her deeply spiritual reasoning, her dignified and modest manners, and her prudent humility, so very attractive; these Gentlemen and Ladies, supervisors of the Luoghi Pii, with a holy violence wanted to keep her in Venice; but as Angela had always made her will turn towards the divine pleasure and to the greater glory of God, the God who had chosen her to establish a different kind of work in the

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> D15

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>55</sup> BELLINTANI, *Vita, op. cit.*, BQ, ms.VI.30, ch.16, f.[13v]: "venuta in Venetia, tosto i raggi della santità sua si sparsero per quella gran Città... Et veduta, di più, la sua prudenza, sforzavanla i Signori soprastanti de Luoghi Pii a trattenersi quivi per beneficio di quelli".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, ch.17, f.[14r]: "molto benignamente la ricevé, et parlolle, esortandola a starsene in Roma; ma essa, che sapeva quello che per divino ordine haveva da eseguire, humilmente iscusatasi et hauta la licenza et la benedittione papale, ritornossene a Brescia".

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., ch.19, f.[14v].

City of Brescia, that very same evening, after these entreaties, ... she departed for Brescia". 58

Gondi continues by relating that Pietro Della Puglia "rejoiced to see her again at Rome and, having kindly made her the offer, he took her in to kiss the foot of His Holiness, who had been well informed by his Chamberlain about the saintly virtues of this Virgin; and so she was invited by the Pontiff to stay on in Rome to help with the Luoghi Pii. However, the Pope was content to accept the excuses she proffered him, and giving her his papal blessing, he allowed her to return to Brescia". 59

Concerning the journey to Milan, Ottavio Gondi says about the visit to the Duke: "... and she was invited with great warmth by the Duke himself to remain in Milan, so that Venice, Rome and Milan, the most important cities of all Italy, wanted, with a holy zeal, to steal this terrestrial Angel from Brescia".60

Bernardino Faino, superior general of the Company of St Ursula, and Carlo Doneda, one of the leading members of the ecclesiastical tribunal for the process of canonisation, both of them Brescians and therefore familiar with the tradition, historiography and iconography of the "Blessed Angela" (in Brescia she had already been called this since the 16th century), naturally go along with Romano's line of thought. For both of them, the invitation to remain in the three cities is the natural outcome of genuine admiration for a woman whose sanctity would have helped to irradiate serenity and peace among those lodged in the various "luoghi pii". They had both taken Romano's and Nazari's words literally and had made no attempt to find any hidden or indirect meanings in them.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p.47: "rallegratosi di rividerla a Roma, dopo essersegli amorevolmente offerto, l'introdusse a bacciare il Piede a sua Santità, il quale benissimo informato dal Cameriere delle qualità sante della Vergine, fu invitata dal Pontefice per aiuto de luoghi pii a trattenersi a Roma; contentossi però il Papa d'accettare le scuse propostegli da Angela, lasciandola con la benedittione pontificale ritornare a Brescia".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>58</sup> GONDI, *Vita, op. cit.*, pp.45-46: "... essendo visitata da Gentilhuomini et Gentildonne, scorgendosi li suoi ragionamenti pieni de spirito, i suoi costumi così ben composti, e la prudentissima humiltà tanto attrattiva, quei Signori e Signore soprastanti a luoghi pii con una santa violenza la volevano trattenere a Venetia; ma, come sempre Angela haveva voltato il volere suo al beneplacito divino e alla sua maggiore gloria, da cui era eletta per differente negotio da fondarsi nella Città di Brescia, la sera medesima, doppo questi preghi, ... si partì alla volta di Brescia".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p.49: "e dal medesimo Duca con molta caldezza fu invitata a restare a Milano, sì che Venetia, Roma e Milano, città principalissime di tutta l'Italia, volevano con santo zelo furare a Brescia questa terrestre Angela".

## b) The later interpretations

The hidden or indirect meanings owe their origin to the pen of a French author whom we have already mentioned, drawing the reader's attention to his lack of critical discipline. We are referring to Jean-Hugues Quarré.<sup>61</sup>

It will suffice to see how Romano's simple statements have been blown up by Quarré, even if it was with the good intention of drawing attention to God's marvels, unduly ignored (in his opinion) and concealed under the dry and concise language of the early biographers.

With an apologetic purpose in mind, Quarré "wants to catch sight of" (this is our version), or "catches sight of" (this would be his version) a whole project which, in his imagination, gradually gets bigger and bigger, from "taking care of the luoghi pii" to "taking over their direction". Thus, with reference to the invitation made to Angela to remain in Venice, he writes in La vie de la Bienheureuse Mère Angèle: "They [the gentlemen and ladies] wanted to force her by all kinds of importunities to remain in Venice: and as they were responsible for the conduct and the superintendence of the Houses of Piety and of Charity, they did all in their power to persuade Angela to take care of them, which she absolutely refused to do".62

But a hundred and fifty pages later, the project has already taken on larger proportions: they want to keep Angela in order to entrust to her "the direction" of all the "luoghi pii" in the city: "She already possessed such a high reputation for virtue and charity that, when she returned from Jerusalem, the leading Lords and Ladies of Venice wanted to keep her by force, in order to put all the places dedicated to charity in this great City under her direction".<sup>63</sup>

When, following the lead of Romano who relates the episode, Quarré speaks about the invitation addressed by the Pope to Angela to remain at Rome "in these luoghi pii", he will boldly transform the simple words of the Brescian merchant into the following: "The Sovereign Pontiff, who had learnt about Angela's virtues from his Chamberlain, invited her to remain in Rome and to take over the government of the

<sup>61</sup> Cf. supra, Pt.I, Ch.II, 1.e.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>62</sup> QUARRÈ, *Vie, op. cit.*, II, c.3, p.298: "Ils la voulurent comme forcer par toutes sortes d'importunitez de demeurer à Venise: et comme ils avoient la conduite et l'intendance des Maisons de Pieté et de Charité, ils firent tous leurs efforts pour persuader à Angèle d'en prendre le soin, ce qu'elle refusa absolument".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, III, c.3, p.456: "Elle estoit déjà en une si haute réputation de vertu et de charité, que retournant de Iérusalem, les principaux Seigneurs et Dames de Venise voulurent la retenir par force, pour mettre en sa direction tous les lieux de cette grande Ville destinez à la charité".

places of devotion intended for charity towards the neighbour".<sup>64</sup> And again: "It is certain that shortly afterwards, Angela being at Rome, His Holiness invited her to stay on and to take over the stewardship and the government of some of the houses of the poor and hospitals".<sup>65</sup>

These texts – let us recall that Quarré's work was published in 1648, and that an extract of the most important biographical information had been widely circulated among the Ursuline religious, as we have already mentioned in Part I <sup>66</sup> – seem to have influenced some later biographers. Not Faino, however, as we have seen, and even less so Doneda who, confronted with the sources, maintains here also his customary critical spirit.

But Quarré's influence comes through in some other biographies, as for example, the Vie de la B. Mère Angèle de Bresse, included in La Gloire de Sainte Ursule, published at Valenciennes in 1656,67 in a Compendio published at Rome in Italian and French in 1768,68 in a short biography of 1767,69 and in the biography of Canon Parenty, edited at Arras in 1842.70

Noteworthy is the way they all agree in attributing the merit and the motive behind the invitation to assume the charge of responsibility which Quarré speaks about to Angela's sanctity, so clearly manifested on the occasion of the pilgrimage to the Holy Land and in the course of her devout conversations. None of them mentions anything about previous experience or competence acquired in the field of relief work or organisation. But all of them, from Quarré onwards, either by paraphrasing or by literally copying him, project onto the Company of St Ursula a whole alleged programme of charity work which Angela is supposed to have assigned to her members.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, II, c.3, p.302: "Le souverain Pontife qui avoit appris de son Chambrier les vertus d'Angèle, la convia de demeurer à Rome, et prendre le gouvernement des lieux de dévotion destinez à la charité du prochain".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, <sup>1</sup>III, c.3, p.456: "Il est certain que peu de temps après, Angèle estant à Rome, sa Saincteté l'invita d'y faire son séjour pour prendre l'intendance et le gouvernement de quelques maisons de pauvres et d'hospitaux".

<sup>66</sup> Cf. supra, Pt.I, Ch.II, 1.e.

<sup>67</sup> La Gloire de S. Ursule, divisée en deux parties. La première contient l'Histoire et Martyre des onze mille Vierges, avec quelques considerations là-dessus. La deuxième est un abregé de la vie d'aucunes filles de S. Ursule, signalées en sainteté. Recueillie par un Père de la Compagnie de Jesus. A Valentiennes, de l'Imprimerie de Jean Boucher, au nom de Iesus, 1656.

Jean Boucher, au nom de Iesus, 1656.

68 Compendio della Vita della Beata Angela Merici, Roma, G. Salomoni, 1768; Abrégé de la vie de la Bienbeureuse Angèle Merici Fondatrice de l'Institut de S. Ursule, Rome, G. Salomoni, 1768.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>69</sup> Carlo Massini, Seconda raccolta di Vite de' Santi per ciaschedun giorno dell'anno ovvero Appendice alla Raccolta delle Vite de' Santi pubblicata l'anno 1763... Novembre. In Roma 1767, Nella Stamperia di Marco Pagliarini, pp.24-29; B.Vat, R.G. Vite V, 752 (11).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>70</sup> Abbé Parenty, Histoire de Sainte Angèle, Fondatrice de l'Ordre de Ste-Ursule, suivie de notes historiques sur les Communautés d'Ursulines au nord de la France et de la Belgique, Arras, Brissy, 1842.

The following passage from Quarré's extract published in the Chroniques de l'Ordre is a good example of this: "[Angela] gave as a rule to her daughters themselves to go and visit the afflicted to console and to instruct them, to bring comfort to the poor, to hasten to the hospitals, to give their services to the sick and to offer themselves humbly for any kind of work where charity might call them. Finally, Angela wanted the daughters of St Ursula to take on all kinds of charitable practices, in order to help in the conversion and the salvation of all men. And although her daughters were free, and for the most part people of quality, she made them become as slaves of all, in imitation of the Apostle, so as to win many to God".<sup>71</sup>

We are not aware of any document which sets out such a programme for the virgins of the Company: none of Angela's Writings nor those of Cozzano make any reference to it. So it is surprising to hear Quarré speaking about it as if it was something fixed and established. The fact that geographically he was far removed from the Brescian scene may excuse him, as he could have been misled by an apparent similarity between the secular institution of Angela Merici and that of St Vincent de Paul's Daughters of Charity, who had been founded as non-religious, precisely so that they might dedicate themselves to carrying out the works of mercy.

On the other hand, we have already pointed out the free rein Quarré gives to his imagination, to say nothing of his deliberate intent to eulogise.

It is even more surprising to find a biographer as serious as Lombardi borrowing the fundamental idea of this passage from Quarré and setting it out without any discussion. However, it is understandable. The Ursulines of the "venerable Monastery of Via Vittoria" in Rome had among their spiritual reading books not only the printed edition of Quarré but also the extract contained in the *Chroniques*, and these were the books which they had presented to the ecclesiastical tribunal for the process of beatification and canonisation. Lombardi, who wrote the *Vita* on behalf of these same Ursulines at Rome, had put great reliance on

La Vie de la B. Mère Angèle de Bresse, Première Institutrice de l'Ordre des Ursulines, tirée du livre de sa vie, composée par le R.P. Hugues Quarré, Prestre de l'Oratoire, sur l'Italien du R.P. Ottavio Florentino, in Les Chroniques de l'Ordre des Ursulines, op. cit., p.22. Cf. supra, Pt.I, Ch.II, 1.e. "[Angèle] donna pour loy à ses mesmes filles d'aller chercher les affligez pour les consoler, et les instruire, de soulager les pauvres, de courir aux Hospitaux, de servir les malades et de se présenter humblement à toutes sortes de travaux où la charité les appelleroit. Enfin Angèle veut que les filles de Saincte Ursule s'employent en toutes sortes d'exercices de charité, pour contribuer à la conversion et au salut de tous les hommes; et quoy que ses filles fussent libres, et la plupart de qualité, elle les obligea de se rendre comme esclaves de tous, à l'imitation de l'Apôtre, afin d'en gagner plusieurs à Dieu".

these texts, often quoting them in his foot-notes, but without any critical evaluation. And, in this particular instance, he had drawn a conclusion from them <sup>72</sup> which even Quarré himself had not dared to do: "If afterwards Blessed Angela exercised her charity with works of mercy to those who were in need close at hand, also in the hospitals and other similar Luoghi Pii, the writers of her Life say nothing about it. But of necessity this can be deduced from what she commanded her daughters to do, and from that much which we see she did herself as recorded by Nazari". <sup>73</sup>

But Lombardi, always so careful to give full references, says nothing here as to where Angela had given such a command. As for the reference to Nazari, it is at the very least unwarranted, as there is no phrase anywhere in his work which lends itself to such an interpretation.

In short, we have here a classical example of a simple, straightforward piece of information, namely the invitation extended to Angela to stay "for the good of the luoghi pii", being enlarged upon for the sake of apologetics. It was almost as if a pedestal of exterior glory had to be constructed in order to throw into relief the spiritual features of the Saint.

It will be useful to examine the position taken with regard to this subject by Teresa Ledóchowska, whose work is chronologically the last comprehensive study on St Angela and carries weight on account of its far-reaching influence and some of its intrinsic qualities.

Unaware of the circumstances which very likely had led to Angela's transfer from the monastery of the Holy Sepulchre to the Hospital for Incurables, Teresa Ledóchowska has tried to get at the meaning behind the events and has arrived at conclusions which we cannot share about what happened in Venice, and consequently in Rome.

The whole chapter entitled "The Beginnings of Angela's Apostolate" <sup>74</sup> is aimed at building up the picture of a woman actively engaged in an apostolate definitely connected with the circle of the Divino Amore <sup>75</sup> and the Hospital for Incurables. This activity, fruit of Angela's wisdom, intelligence and experience, would be the real reason behind the repeated invitations begging her not to leave. The invitation issued by the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>72</sup> LOMBARDI, Vita, op. cit., p.72 for Venice; p.74 for Rome.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p.157: "Se poi anche negli spedali, e in altri simiglianti Luoghi pii la B. Angela esercitasse la sua carità verso i prossimi bisognosi con opere di misericordia, nol dicono gli scrittori della sua Vita. Ma pur di necessità convien inferirlo, e dall'aver Ella ciò comandato alle sue figlie, e da quel tanto che di lei stessa veggiam ricordato dal Nazari".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>74</sup> LEDÓCHOWSKA, *Angela, op. cit.*, I, pp.52-74. We will be drawing some other quotations from this chapter "The Beginnings of Angela's Apostolate", without giving each page-reference.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>75</sup> Association founded towards the end of the 15th century with high spiritual aims and devoted to the works of mercy. Membership of the Divino Amore had to remain secret. Antonio Cistellini, *Figure*, op. cit., collected several important documents about it. See Appendix Note to this chapter.

Venetian nobility is interpreted as being a recognition of the organisational skills that Angela had already given proof of in Brescia. In other words, they had evidently wanted to entrust to her the responsibility of coordinating the apostolic good works carried out by groups of women associated with the men in the government of the "luoghi pii", "as Angela had done at Brescia".

In our view this hypothesis contradicts the contemporary evidence which we have collected together and reported about the "good offices for her neighbour" carried out by Angela, and it also goes against the rectifications we have made to some of the inaccuracies which had been written about the activity of Angela's "friends" among the Incurables.<sup>76</sup>

On the other hand, the seriousness of purpose behind Teresa Ledóchowska's search for a new face to Angela Merici prompts us to re-

flect on the possible source of her line of reasoning.

It seems to us to have originated in the work of Cistellini, a work highly appreciated by T. Ledóchowska for the novelty of his interpretations and for his attempt to place the biographical material in the historical setting which served as the backdrop for it. One of her aims seems to have been to bring to light this connection between Angela's life and her historical background (and in particular, with the Divino Amore movement).

A certain confusion seems to have been caused unintentionally by Cistellini (as we will see in the short excursus in the Appendix Note to this chapter), who gives the impression that a large number of Brescians, members of the Divino Amore, were involved in the Hospital for Incurables. This leads T. Ledóchowska to conclude that "What was peculiar to it [to the Hospital] was that it belonged to the Company of Divino Amore", and that, as a result, the members of that movement were directly involved in the care of the sick.

But it is above all the information regarding Isabetta Prato, reported in the Annali del Ven.do Luogo Pio delle Convertite cioè della Carità <sup>77</sup> and in the Vita di Laura Gambara, <sup>78</sup> which has led her to deduce that "Very soon a group of women was formed also, working with the Brothers of Divino Amore: among them were Countess Laura Gambara, belonging to a high patrician family in Brescia, …; with Laura worked another young widow, Elisabetta Prato, whose name is a household word among the first Ursulines".

From the charitable activity of these two women (we know nothing

<sup>78</sup> FAINO, Brescia Beata, op. cit., BQ, ms.E.I.2, p.413. Cf. supra, Pt.II, Ch.III, g.

Cf. supra, Pt.II, Ch.III; and infra, Appendix Note to this chapter.
 Cf. supra, Pt.I, Ch.I, 2.c.

about there being a group) and on the presumption that nearly all Angela's friends belonged to the movement of the Divino Amore (and therefore to the circle of those who gravitated around the "Incurables") it was an easy step to arrive at the following statement: "... it becomes clear that Angela played an active part in all the work at the 'Incurabili' ", and then to conclude that "the Company of St Ursula was inspired by that movement, even if not, at least at its inception, a parallel foundation for women".

But, in the light of the documentation we have recently discovered and cited in this study, these two statements are no longer tenable.

Moreover, neither the iconography of past centuries, nor the Italian historiography, we have already mentioned this but it must be repeated, nor local tradition and devotion have ever attributed to Angela Merici any charitable activity on behalf of the sick, and even less any role in the organisation of the "luoghi pii".

During the interrogations of the "Processo Nazari", neither Giacomo Chizzola nor Agostino Gallo, both of whom held some kind of charge or office at the Hospital for Incurables, established any link whatsoever between Angela and that "luogo pio" or other similar ones; they made no reference at all to the care of the sick or visiting them as a specific work of mercy which Angela would have frequently undertaken.

Before closing this long parenthesis on any activity Angela is supposed to have carried out in the "luoghi pii", as a result of the invitation addressed to her by the nobles of the Venetian aristocracy, we will add two further remarks.

Marin Sanudo,<sup>79</sup> so attentive to the events which touched on the religious, political, civil or military life of the Serenissima, and so diligent in noting anything which concerned patrician society, did not make the slightest reference to Angela's presence in Venice, or to the interest it aroused among the nobles of the city. And yet his brother Antonio had been "podestà" of Brescia from 30 November 1522 to May 1524, and it was during that time that the piece of land of the Garzetta had been set aside for the construction of the Brescian hospital for Incurables. Antonio had returned to Venice at the expiry of his mandate. If Angela, at that time, had enjoyed such great renown at Brescia, Antonio Sanudo would not have been able to ignore this woman who, on her return from Jerusalem, caused such a stir among the nobility. It seems obvious to us that he would have spoken about her then to his brother, and the latter

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>79</sup> Cf. supra, 1.a.

would not have missed the opportunity of adding some extra detail in his chronicle, unless, perhaps, the invitation to stay had been too informal to attract the chronicler's interest.

There is still another factor which makes it very unlikely that overall responsibility would have been handed over to one person: the specific structure of the Venetian hospitals, whose organs of government were "lay, collegial and elective, consisting of persons from different levels of society"; to the religious fell the spiritual side of things.<sup>80</sup>

#### 4. AT MANTUA

We have already mentioned the pilgrimage Angela made with Antonio Romano to Mantua, as it was on the return journey that they had passed through Solferino to beg a favour from the Lord of Castiglione. The goal of this pilgrimage was the tomb of Osanna Andreasi. Born in 1449 of the noble Nicola and of Agnese Gonzaga, Osanna had become a Dominican tertiary at the age of fifteen. After mystical marriage, Christ had conferred on her the stigmata, the pains of the crown of thorns and the piercing of the heart. To her renown for sanctity was added also the lustre of her contacts with the court of the Duke of Mantua. Angela could have heard about this mystic while the latter was still alive, but nothing definite about this has come down to us.

Osanna had died in 1505, and already by 1514 Leo X had ordered the canonical process to be set up for her beatification and given permission for her cult to be celebrated. Her remains were reposing at that time in the church of San Domenico,<sup>82</sup> and this is where Antonio Romano had accompanied Angela. As a matter of fact, the way he expresses himself when relating the episode: "We had gone to Mantua to pay a visit to the Madre Suor Osanna" must have given rise to some uncertainty among the biographers, torn between the logical significance of the dates and what was actually said. Round about 1520 Osanna was already dead, but Romano relates the fact as if it was a question of visiting someone still alive, and this is how it was understood and repeated by Bellintani and Gondi.<sup>83</sup> From this it could be deduced that the two saints had

83 BELLINTANI, Vita, op. cit., BQ, ms.B.VI.30, f.[14v]; GONDI, Vita, op. cit., pp.48-49.

MARIA FRANCESCA TIEPOLO, Gli Ospedali, in Difesa della Sanità a Venezia - Secoli XIII-XIX, Catalogo di Mostra documentaria, a cura del Ministero per i Beni culturali e ambientali. Archivio di Stato di Venezia, 23 giugno - 30 settembre 1979, p.63.
 Cf. supra, Pt.II, Ch.IV, d.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>82</sup> ALESSANDRO MAGNAGUTI, La Beata Osanna degli Andreasi. Biografia illustrata da quattro fotoincisioni e cinque xilografie. Gregoriana editrice, Padova, 1949, passim.

known each other earlier, a view which Lombardi expresses without, however, supporting or rejecting it.84

Doneda, on the other hand, thinks it necessary to make it clear that, given the circumstances, the pilgrimage had been simply a devotional

one to the tomb of Blessed Osanna.85

Besides Osanna Andreasi, Bellintani and Gondi mention another woman, Stefana Quinzani. An almost illiterate servant-girl from Orzinuovi, she had moved to Crema and then to Soncino. She also had received the stigmata and had been a Dominican tertiary before becoming the foundress of the Dominican monastery of Soncino.

After the death of Osanna, it was Stefana who had taken over her role as a kind of spiritual mother to Gian Francesco Gonzaga, and it was to Stefana that the lords of Mantua and Ferrara used to come. The Doge of Venice and the gentlemen of various places all aspired to keep her in their respective cities. Ludovico il Moro and Francesco Sforza II had both turned to her for consolation.

Stefana had been to Brescia several times, 86 staying for certain with the Dominicans, and it is there that Angela could easily have got to know her and to establish bonds of spiritual friendship with her. It is even possible that Stefana had spoken to Angela about Blessed Osanna, kindling in her a devotion to the stigmatist of Mantua and the desire to make a pilgrimage to her tomb. The "Processo Nazari" makes no reference to this relationship between Angela and Stefana. Bellintani is the first to speak about it (and we must not forget that Bellintani had lived in Brescia for a long time and so would have been able to collect together information about this friendship between the two women). He says: "She also had a great friendship with the Blessed Steffana degli Orzi, a place in Brescian territory", 87 but he does not add anything to enlighten this statement. Gondi and Faino affirm that Angela had visited Stefana at Soncino in the course of her pilgrimage to Varallo,88 but neither of them has attempted to trace back to the possible origin of this friendly relationship which, in our opinion, started within the Brescian circle.

Only Lombardi, looking for an explanation, refers to the "close familiarity and friendship" between Angela, Osanna and Stefana, and he

85 DONEDA, Vita, op. cit., p.138, n.21.

88 GONDI, Vita, op. cit., pp.48-49; FAINO, Vita, op. cit., p.38.

<sup>84</sup> LOMBARDI, Vita, op. cit., p.57.

<sup>86</sup> CISTELLINI, Figure, op. cit., "B. Stefana Quinzani", pp.36-46, passim.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>87</sup> BELLINTANI, *Vita, op. cit.*, BQ, ms.B.VI.30, f.[14v]: "Hebbe anco molta famigliarità con la Beata Steffana degli Orzi, luogo del territorio bresciano".

attributes it to Angela's devotion to the Passion of Christ, the stigmata of which the other two were carrying in their flesh.<sup>89</sup>

Stefana died on 2 January 1530. If Angela's first pilgrimage to Varallo really did take place between 1528-1529, it can be assumed that Angela had been able to see her friend some time earlier, when Blessed Stefana was already seriously ill.

In spite of her extreme caution regarding any extraordinary mystical phenomena, Angela had not hesitated to make friends with a stigmatist, or to show veneration for another one already dead. Her discernment and intuitive wisdom helped her to evaluate people and events accurately 90 and to view things with a certain prudent suspicion which, however, turned into reverence as soon as she recognised God's intervention.

#### 5. AT VARALLO

Varallo is situated at the confluence of the river Sesia and the torrent Mastellone, in the present province of Vercelli (north-west Italy). At the time of the pilgrimages we are going to speak about, Varallo belonged to the State of Milan.

A Franciscan friar who had formerly been Custodian of the Holy Land, Bernardino Caimi, had the idea of reconstructing the Holy Places of Jerusalem on the hill behind the village, and this "Sacro Monte" is

still visited today by pilgrims.

The friar had started to put his plan into operation in 1491, and until his death in 1499, he expended all his efforts on it. His aim was to offer a catechesis of the story of the Redemption, reproducing the scenes and background of it in model form. For every mystery of Christ's life, for every event of his Passion, a chapel was planned, where the scene would be reconstructed with a careful eye to historical truth, interpreted through the medium of lifesize statues. From the very beginning, well-known artists of merit, such as Gaudenzio Ferrari with his son Gerolamo and his disciple Fermo Stella, had engaged their intuition and creative skills in the project. But the whole complex of forty-five chapels would not be finally completed until the 20th century.

The direct language of these scenes with their startlingly realistic statues, was meant to evoke in the pilgrims a strong emotion, and the

fame of this sacred place spread rapidly.

89 LOMBARDI, Vita, op. cit., p.57.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. Processo Nazari, D16, the deposition of Agostino Gallo.

Angela went to Varallo twice, but we only know the exact date of the second visit – August 1532, as reported by Agostino Gallo who had accompanied her. The first pilgrimage, according to Gallo, had taken place soon after the return from Rome, but this information is not much help in dating the event.

It was during one of the two return journeys that Angela would have made her visit to Francesco Sforza II. It must have happened during the first one, as Gallo makes no reference to the fact when he speaks

about the second journey, in which he himself had participated.

But Angela knew the Duke only in June 1528, and so the first journey must have taken place after this date, but before 1529 when the threats of war forced the Gallo family to leave their town to take refuge in Cremona. Thus, it could have been undertaken in the summer or autumn of that same year 1528, or in the spring of 1529, given that Nazari in his *Vita* notes that it took place "the year following the meeting". On her return to Brescia, according to Romano's testimony, Angela passed through Milan in order to greet the Duke; he begged her in vain to remain in that city. This would be the third "invitation to remain" addressed to Angela.

At that particular time, to tell the truth, Milan was in the hands of the imperial troops; Angela could have met Francesco Sforza only in some place belonging to the Milanese, as Doneda also notes: "It must be said that she did not meet the Duke in Milan, but in some other place be-

longing to that State. I do not know which one".91

Lombardi affirms that Romano took part in that journey,<sup>92</sup> but this seems unlikely, given the latter's silence about what happened on the pilgrimage and the absence of any personal memories. Lombardi indicates the itinerary Angela would have followed during the first part of the journey: she would have left Cremona during her stay there, and gone in the direction of Crema and Lodi, making a detour to Soncino to pay a visit to Stefana Quinzani. This, however, is only conjecture.

Teresa Ledóchowska sets out very well the whole basic problem in putting a date to Angela's first journey to Varallo. We can only agree and conclude with her that "the question therefore remains an open

one".93

When Angela had visited the "Sacro Monte" for the first time, the

93 LEDÓCHOWSKA, Angela, op. cit., I, p.97, n.37.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>91</sup> DONEDA, Vita, op. cit., p.141, n.26: "è forza dire ch'Ella si abboccasse col Duca non in Milano, ma in qualche altro luogo di quello Stato. Qual poi fosse, io non so dirlo".
<sup>92</sup> LOMBARDI, Vita, op. cit., p.79.

buildings had scarcely been started. Even so, she had been able to contemplate the group of chapels dedicated to the Nativity, the Adoration of the Magi and the Shepherds, the Presentation in the Temple, the warning given to Joseph to flee to Egypt, as well as those of the Last Supper, the Crucifixion of Jesus, the Deposition and the Holy Sepulchre. The figurative part (statues and paintings), however, was certainly not finished.

Angela must have felt a whole surge of memories sweep through her, enabling her to relive the spiritual experience of the pilgrimage to the Holy Land. It is certainly not surprising that she wanted to go back once more to Varallo. This she did in the summer of 1532, with Agostino Gallo and his sister Ippolita in the same party. In his deposition of 1568, Gallo would state quite firmly that he was the only one left: "out of the fourteen that we were, all are dead except me". When Nazari writes, in the *Vita*, that Angela went there "accompanied by the same Gallo, his sister, and twelve other spiritual companions", he clearly means this to be understood that Angela's companions numbered fourteen. Neither of them seems to have attached any importance to the members of the party, all of whom remain shrouded in anonymity.

We have to wait for Faino before meeting a list of names, but he himself says that this list is based more on guess-work than on any definite documentation. In his Miscellanea,94 he goes in search of twelve disciples, twelve maiden travelling "companions", thus excluding a priori - but with no sound foundation - any idea that the group could have been composed differently. He takes the first names from Cozzano's Dichiarazione della Bolla, which lists thirteen among the "numerous virgins who were the first-fruits of the Holy Spirit in this society". Faino adds surnames to the Christian names, without evidently taking the trouble to see that they correspond with the true identity of the people, and from these he draws up a list of twelve virgins. When he publishes his Vita later, in 1672, he subsequently modifies the list, but still keeping the number to twelve. We will be looking at these names in the chapter on the foundation of the Company of St Ursula. Suffice it for the moment to say that we have here another example of Faino's completely unfounded deductions. Anyway, even if some of the first virgins of the Company had been in the pilgrimage party, there is no document at the moment which would warrant fixing their surnames and Christian names in a list.

<sup>94</sup> FAINO, Miscellanea, BQ, ms.K.VI.1, f.167. Cf. also infra, Pt.II, Ch.VII, 3.a.

#### a) The "Divino Amore"

We thought it would be useful to collect together in this note some relevant facts about the Hospital for Incurables at Brescia, about the role played in it by some of the personalities of the Merician circle and about the Confraternity

of the Most Holy Trinity established to help and support it.

The "incurables" consisted largely of those afflicted with syphilis, a disease brought to Italy by the troops of Charles VIII. Out of repugnance and fear of contagion, these people were rejected and kept on the fringe of society. At the origin of the hospitals reserved for this kind of patient we find, at Brescia as already in Rome and Genoa, some members of an association of a religious character, which was aimed at a deep spiritual renewal of the individual, and was called the Company of Divine Love.

This movement and its members were surrounded by the strictest secrecy, the infringement of which could lead to very severe punishments and even expulsion. Thus, Ettore Vernazza, founder of the Genoese group – the first group to leave behind complete statutes <sup>1</sup> – never spoke about it, not even to his daughter, the Venerable Giovanna Battista, abbess of the monastery delle Grazie at Genoa. This secrecy was kept so faithfully that it is extremely difficult to reconstruct the cadres and the lists of those belonging to the movement.

Following the example perhaps of similar societies already established in various cities throughout the peninsula,<sup>2</sup> the Company of Divine Love was established in Genoa in 1497 <sup>3</sup> to meet the need of restoring Christian life. It had as its aim "to plant and to cultivate in hearts ... divine love, namely, charity".<sup>4</sup> It prescribed certain individual acts of piety and some regular community meetings; it demanded an integral Christian life; it fixed the number of its members at 36 laymen and 4 priests, and decided on a sum of money as a contribution; it established the office of "visitors to the sick" for the help of confreres who were sick, but did not lay down any specific activity to be carried out.

A 1514 appendix to the Statutes prescribed that the Prior and his council should try and find some suitable way of helping the four protectors whom the Senate had put in charge of the virgins and women of the Conservatory, set up in the monastery of Sant'Andrea.<sup>5</sup> There is no other reference to any direct works of charity. Each member chose his own, according to circumstances and means: to visit the sick or those in prison, to come to the aid of those ashamed

<sup>2</sup> PIETRO TACCHI VENTURI SJ, *Storia della Compagnia di Gesù in Italia* narrata col sussidio di fonti inedite, vol.I, parte II, 3ª ediz., "La Civiltà Cattolica", Roma 1950, p.6, note 2.

<sup>3</sup> PASCHINI, La beneficenza, op. cit., pp.5-11.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., pp.37-38.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Pio Paschini, La beneficenza in Italia e le "Compagnie del Divino Amore" nei primi decenni del Cinquecento, Note storiche, Editrice F.I.U.C, Roma 1925, p.16.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Capitoli della Confraternita del Divino Amore, p.25. These are the Statutes discovered and published by TACCHI VENTURI, Storia, op. cit., vol.I, parte II, pp.25-42.

of their poverty, to put sinners back on the right path, to protect young people from vice.

Tacchi Venturi published the Bull of 19 March 1513,<sup>6</sup> in which Leo X welcomed the request which the members had addressed to his predecessor, and, in view of the "uberes fructus quos producebant confratres clerici et laici nonnullarum societatum Divini Amoris nuncupatarum in pluribus Italiae civitatibus pie institutarum et ordinatarum", he approved the said Company and granted it indulgences and privileges. The publication and the compulsory executorial process of this Bull did not take place until 6 November 1514.

Notwithstanding the geographical dispersal of the society "in pluribus Italiae civitatibus", numerically it does not seem to have expanded very much. More than thirty years after the foundation, Suor Battista Vernazza wrote, referring probably to Genoa where it had started: "et hora sono quaranta di essa

compagnia".7

When, in 1515, Ettore Vernazza introduced the Company of Divine Love to Rome, his first thought was to set up a hospital for the men and women who had fallen victim to the "French disease". Such was the origin of the hospital of S. Giacomo in Augusta. The Roman Company of Divine Love would die out following the Sack of Rome, without any detriment to the hospital itself.

After Pio Paschini's study on the Divino Amore movement, the work of Cistellini, Figure della Riforma pretridentina, brought to light some interesting documents, such as the "chapters" or Statutes of the Roman and Brescian confraternities, and a list entitled "Nomina fratrum Societatis D.A. in Urbe superstitum et defunctorum – 1524", which is in the Biblioteca Comunale of

Bergamo.10

On this list there are 56 names of those belonging to the confraternity, beginning from the time it was founded, as Vernazza's name is included. Thirteen of these had died already; twenty-five were living in Rome; the other eighteen belonged to different regions in Italy, but they could well have gravitated towards the Roman centre of the movement. Among the names of members on this list are those of five Brescians: Maffeo Poncarali, Bartolomeo Stella, Giovanni Zanetti, all three of them priests, and then Cesare Averoldi and a certain Viviano, a Brescian living in Rome.

In 1525, a Brief of Clement VII gave permission for setting up in Brescia "unam Confraternitatem seu Societatem sub invocatione divini amoris et protectione gloriosi Ecclesiae doctoris beati Jeronimi". <sup>12</sup> It was dated 6 March, and

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p.36, note 1 on p.35.

<sup>10</sup> Bergamo, Biblioteca Civica, Archivio Silvestri, Carte Stella, scat.40, n.28.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp.99-100 and p.59.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., pp.38-42.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> PASCHINI, La beneficenza, op. cit., pp.50-51, quoting C. B. PIAZZA, Delle opere pie di Roma, Trattato VII, cap.XX.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> CISTELLINI, Figure, op. cit., pp.282-283; we are referring to his critical introduction on pp.269-273 and to his presentation of some of the members of the Company on pp.283-288.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Vernazza, who is included here among those still alive, died in 1524; PASCHINI, La beneficenza, op. cit., p.31.

was addressed to two of the Brescian priests already inscribed on the Roman list: Zanetti and Poncarali. The confraternity, therefore, had not been officially established in Brescia before 1525.

## b) The Hospital for Incurables

If the society of Divine Love had not yet been established as such in Brescia, at least three of its Brescian members, as we shall see, had been living

there permanently since 1521: Zanetti, Poncarali and Stella.

Bartolomeo Stella, a Brescian noble, had returned home after a period in Rome devoted to studies, enriched by the deep spiritual and practical experience he had gained at the hospital of S. Giacomo in Augusta. He had struck up a close friendship there with Cajetan of Thiene and with the members of Divino Amore – some of whom would later become Theatines, following Cajetan – and had embraced the priesthood. Only after this did he make his return to Brescia.

It is not easy to say if and what role he had played in promoting the foundation of the Hospital for the Incurables. Paschini also draws attention to this fact, while pointing out that Stella had been elected councillor of the Roman hospital of S. Giacomo on 2 May 1519, and that, on 9 April 1521, he had been present at Rome on the occasion of the drawing up of an official act of this

hospital.13

On 31 December 1520, Leo X gave the city of Brescia permission to establish and to build a hospital for the incurably sick poor "de consensu illorum ad quos spectat", and he granted to the officers, the sick, the staff and the confraternity members of the hospital – when they eventually would appear – all the privileges and indults, all the exemptions, graces and indulgences, with which he had enriched those who visited the church of the Roman hospital, and this under the same conditions.14

The Church thus gave the lead, with her approval, to the enterprise of the General Council of the city of Brescia ("de consensu illorum ad quos spectat"), encouraging the good will and enthusiasm of the various collaborators, thanks to the spiritual means at her disposal, namely indulgences.

On 15 March 1521, the General Council itself decided in favour of the construction; 15 on 18 March, Giovanni Chizzola, Prior of the Major Hospital, with the approval of the Special Council of the lay confraternity members of this hospital, gave permission for certain rooms to be used so that a temporary start could be made. 16 On 27 April, the city General Council made note that the Hospital for Incurables had to be declared autonomous (independent, that is, of the

13 Ibid., p.57.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> ASB, Documenti Fondazione Spedali Civili, Diplomatico 2º, sez. 18. Documenti di fondazione degli Incurabili ora delle Donne, carta, n.66, copy of the Brief "Nuper pro parte vestra".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> ASC, Libri Provisionum Civitatis Brixiae, vol.528, f.158r-v.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> ASB, Liber Provisionum Hospitalis Magni Brixiae, anno 1510 usque ad annum... Deposito dell'Ospedale, n.9, f.161v.

Major Hospital), as was the case of S. Giacomo in Rome, so that it could enjoy

the same indulgences.<sup>17</sup>

On 2 May 1521, the "Consortium descriptorum" was convened; this was the assembly of the subscribers to the future hospital. Its purpose was to elect "from the said assembly a hundred and twenty-five persons from among the most suitable and capable, to form the Council of the aforesaid Hospital". Among those elected we find three members of the Divino Amore, Stella, Poncarali and Zanetti, as well as two other priests whom we will meet later, Aurelio Durante and Donato Savallo. The 122nd name on the list is Girolamo Patengola. 18

When, on 8 May, they proceeded to the election of a "massaro" or administrative treasurer, it was Bartolomeo Stella who was elected. <sup>19</sup> A notarial deed quoted by Cistellini would refer to him later as "instaurator, defensor et massa-

rius".20

It was only in 1523, on 16 April, that the General Council of the Territory of Brescia (followed on 18 April by the General Council of the City) made a gift of a piece of land for the erection of the hospital; <sup>21</sup> it was the site of the former fort of the Garzetta, which Venice had had dismantled and demolished in 1516. Bishop Paolo Zane laid the first stone on 29 June of that same year. <sup>22</sup> The date of 1521, given in some sources, is clearly wrong.

In the meantime the hospital was gradually beginning to function "de facto", using the restricted area that the Major Hospital had offered it on a temporary basis in the part previously set aside as a receiving centre for the poor.

The new Hospital for Incurables, under the title of the Most Holy Trinity and of Charity, started being able to be used perhaps at the beginning of 1525. The minutes of 21 February 1525 record: "Ex noviter in civitate Brixiae erectus fuit aliud hospitale infirmorum incurabilium in quo sunt multi infirmi utriusque sexus". <sup>23</sup> Is this referring to the new construction or to the "Incurables" section operating in the Major Hospital?

In the minutes of 29 March 1571 there is an indication, albeit approximate, about the bedspace of the hospital constructed at the Garzetta: "There are never

18 Libro primo delli Consigli Generali, op. cit., ff.5r-6v.

<sup>20</sup> CISTELLINI, Figure, op. cit., p.83, n.48.

23 Fondazione dell'Ospitale, op. cit., f.4.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> ASB, Libro primo delli Consigli Generali dal 1521 al 1561, Ospedale Incurabili, 27 aprile 1521, f.8v; Annali dell'Ospitale delli Incurabili di Brescia, Tomo I, f.1. The Pope had raised the one at Rome to the status of an "archiospedale", "as head of all the hospitals for the poor who were incurably ill, which had been or would be built, no matter where". (PASCHINI, La beneficenza, op. cit., p.36).

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., f.7r.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> ASC, Fondazione dell'Ospitale, Privilegi ed altro sin l'anno 1629, ff.1r-3v; Liber Provisionum, C.VII.529, ff.44r-46r.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> BERNARDINO VALLABIO, Cronichetta di Bernardino Vallabio 1506-1630, in GUERRINI, Cronache Bresciane inedite, op. cit., vol.II, p.175; BERNARDINO FAINO, Thesaurus Ecclesiae Brixiae: omnium Episcoporum ab eius Apostolo S. Barnaba usque ad regnantem Eminentiss. et Reverendiss. D.D. Petrum Otthobonum..., "De Paulo Zane Episcopo 990", BQ, ms.E.I.1., f.315.

more than about 40-50 people in this place, both men and women stricken with the incurable disease".<sup>24</sup>

This Hospital for Incurables, constructed on the quadrilateral base of the Garzetta, had been described by Canti in his satire to Patengola as being "perignobile, egenum, pusillum".<sup>25</sup> In Angela's time it certainly must have looked very different from the imposing edifice depicted in an etching by F. Battaglioli and F. Zucchi in 1750,<sup>26</sup> after the subsequent enlargements had transformed it into the Hospital for Women, with the orphanage of the Pietà as an annexe.

This transformation, which began in 1548 with the re-grouping of the men at the Major Hospital and the women at the Hospital for Incurables, with no further separation for the contagious disease, explains why the search for archives material is sometimes difficult. In this same year, 1548, those orphangirls who had found shelter initially with the penitent women in the house of the Carità, were transferred to the Major Hospital, which had become a men's hospital; while in 1562, those orphans who had been entrusted to the care of private persons had been reassembled in the former Hospital for Incurables, then a women's hospital, thus forming the "luogo pio della Pietà" and it is this which required the enlargements mentioned above.<sup>27</sup>

"From the beginning", according to a piece of evidence found by Doneda "in the Books of the Company", 28 "the Ursulines of Brescia devoted themselves" in these two establishments set aside for the orphans, "to teaching young girls Christian doctrine, as they still do; and also for a long time afterwards there were Ursulines in the Luogo Pio della Pietà for the education of the poor orphans, and in the Major Hospital as mistresses of the abandoned girls".<sup>29</sup>

With the details provided by Faino, one can get a better idea of the kind of setting in which the virgins of the Company carried out their educative work:

"It must not be forgotten that three Luoghi Pii in particular receive an adequate number of virgins from the Company. These are: the enclosed area or conclave of the Major Hospital, where (in addition to the large infirmary ward and another room where illegitimate boys are brought up and nurtured with great care) a large number of young girls of illegitimate birth are brought up;

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Libro primo delli Consigli Generali, op. cit., f.46v.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. supra, Pt.II, Ch.III, b.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> GUERRINI, S. Angela, op. cit., tav.XIII; Il volto storico di Brescia, Brescia, Edizione Comune di Brescia 1981, vol.IV, pp.147 and 157; stampe G XLIV6 e G XLIV7, p.157; ROBERTO LOMBARDI, La visita apostolica di S. Carlo alla parrocchia di S. Lorenzo in Brescia, ediz. "Brixia Sacra" and "Memorie Bresciane", Brescia 1981, plate included on p.49.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> Libro primo delli Consigli Generali, op. cit., ff.29v-30v and 10r; ASDM, Sez.X, Visita Pastorale di S. Carlo, Brescia 1580, vol.IX, "Hospitale Santiss.me Trinitatis et Caritatis incurabilium vulgo nuncupatum". [TN: It is to be understood that in the following pages "orphans" means "orphan-girls"].

<sup>28</sup> DONEDA, Vita, op. cit., p.170.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> Ibid., p.111: "sin dall'origine loro le Orsoline in Brescia si occuparono, come fanno tuttora nell'insegnare alle fanciulle la dottrina cristiana, e anche per molto tempo dopo vi furono Orsoline nel Pio Luogo della Pietà per l'educazione delle povere orfanelle, e nell'Ospedal Maggiore per maestre delle esposte". This passage, and the following one of Faino, help us to understand the meaning of Landini's statement: "All the Brescian hospitals have been served by them up to the present; they are likewise in all the schools of Christian doctrine for girls ...". (LANDINI, Estratto, op. cit., D15).

the Pietà, where the little orphan-girls without father or mother are looked after; and the "Cittelle", where are kept those young girls who, just on the threshold of adolescence, have been snatched from situations likely to compromise their honesty and are raised in great observance and virtue; [the virgins of the Company] help in the good running of these same luoghi pii, in which they live together, but in dependence on the Company; and, on feast-days, their churches resound inside with polyphonic and gregorian song, and even with music ...".<sup>30</sup>

These documents prove, therefore, that the first Ursulines were entrusted with the work of education and assistance in these three "luoghi pii", on behalf of the illegitimate girls, the orphans and the "citelle", in other words, young adolescent girls brought together in a conservatory with a view to giving them the training they needed.

As for Angela, we did not succeed in finding out anything, not the slightest indication, not even a hint, of her presence, or of any action or any involvement in or on behalf of the "luoghi pii". Of course, this in no way precludes the possibility that Angela could have occasionally paid a visit to someone in one of these places to bring the comfort of her word or to lend a helping hand in some case of emergency, but there are no documents, no evidence, no tradition which confirm this.

#### c) Merician circle - Divino Amore - Incurabili

It has been said that Angela was associated with the circle of those involved in the "luoghi pii" and in the Divino Amore. One of the arguments upon which this conjecture rests is the fact that she was supposed to have been on friendly terms with members of this society, as well as with persons engaged in the foundation or in the direction of charitable relief work.<sup>31</sup> But this line of argument needs to be re-examined and checked.

The root of it, in our view, lies in the mistaken identification of a hospital's "confratres" with the members of the pious confraternities which took the same name as the hospitals, and with the members of the religious congregations founded to assist the sick. The first were the members of the executive council of the hospital itself; the second supported the hospital spiritually and economic-

<sup>31</sup> LEDÓCHOWSKA, Angela, op. cit., "The Beginnings of Angela's Apostolate", I, pp.52-74. We will be giving other references from this chapter, without indicating each page-reference.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> FAINO, "Note varie per la biografia" in *Miscellanea, op cit.*, f.16r-v: "Non si deve tralasciare che in tre luoghi pii particolarmente, cioè: nel serraglio o conclave dell'Hospital Maggiore, dove (oltre all'appartamento grande dell'infermaria et un altro de gli figliuoli illegitimi che vi si nodriscono et allevano con cura grande) si allevano giovanette in gran numero di nascita illegitima; nella Pietà, dove si custodiscono le figliuole orfanelle senza padre et madre; et nelle Cittelle, dove si conservano quelle giovanette che, nello spuntare della loro adolescentia, si rapiscono dalle imminenti occasioni di precipitare la loro honestà et s'allevano in grande osservanza et virtù, si concede competente numero di Vergini della Compagnia per il buon reggimento di detti luoghi, ne'i quali pure vivono collegialmente, con dippendenza però dalla Compagnia, et nelle feste officiano interiormente le loro chiese con canto figurato et gregoriano, et anco in musica...".

ally, in exchange for the indulgences promised by the Sovereign Pontiff; it was only occasionally, and as a personal choice, that someone might be allowed to

give some help.

As for the last of these three categories, namely that of the religious congregations dedicated – through their institutional charisma – to the care and the assistance of the sick, these are of a relatively late date. And so, by superimposing the figure of the brother infirmarian on to that of the "confratres" of the hospital and on to that of the members of the corresponding confraternities, one runs the risk of concluding that they all played an active and direct role in helping the sick.

The Hospital for Incurables at Brescia, called after the Most Holy Trinity, had its own confraternity, endowed with indulgences from Clement VII.<sup>32</sup>

The Company of Divine Love at Brescia – authorised by the Pope, moreover, almost five years after the foundation of the Hospital <sup>33</sup> – is never mentioned in the documents of this hospital or of any other Brescian hospital. Cistellini writes: "Working as constant collaborators beside Stella, recognised from the beginning as 'instaurator, defensor et massarius' of the new hospital, are also the members of the Divino Amore including the canons Zanetti and Poncarali, Don Francesco Benaglia, Zanetti's vicar at S. Zeno, Gerolamo Patengola and another hundred or so people more or less well known to historians. In the following years, the name of Jacopo Chizzola also appears among the councillors".<sup>34</sup>

This assertion must have played a part in leading T. Ledóchowska astray, as it could be taken to mean that all Stella's collaborators were members of the Divino Amore and that, therefore, the Hospital was not only a direct off-shoot of the confraternity, but that it belonged to it and was run and served by it. And since some of these "people more or less well known to historians" belonged to

Angela's circle, T. Ledóchowska has concluded that:

- "Though the links between Angela and the Company of Divino Amore are firmly established, it is not easy to define their exact nature";

- "... her services were highly appreciated";

- "The Company of St Ursula was inspired by that movement, even if not, at least at its inception, a parallel foundation for women".

We are deferring a careful examination of this last statement to the following chapters, in the course of which the features of the Company of St Ursula will clearly appear.

We will just note here that the Company did not start as a movement, nor as a pious association, but as a state of consecrated life. It did not borrow its

<sup>32</sup> Cf. infra, d.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. supra, note 12.

<sup>34</sup> CISTELLINI, Figure, op. cit., p.83: "Accanto allo Stella, riconosciuto fin da principio 'instaurator, defensor et massarius' del nuovo ospedale, si trovano come assidui collaboratori i membri stessi del Divino Amore, fra i quali i canonici Zanetti e Poncarali, D. Francesco Benaglia, vicario dello Zanetti a S. Zeno, Gerolamo Patengola e un altro centinaio di persone più o meno note agli storici. Negli anni seguenti fra i consiglieri compare anche il nome di Jacopo Chizzola".

aims, its structures or its spirituality from the Divino Amore and so it cannot be considered as "a parallel foundation for women".

Teresa Ledóchowska bases her conclusions on the presentation she makes of some of the personalities of the Merician circle, considered in their connections with the movement of Divine Love or with the activities of the "luoghi pii". We are going to look at these again, from the same angle, making a few rectifications. But let us say, from the outset, that we do not want to exclude a priori the possibility that some of them may have been members of the Divino Amore movement; we only want to add some precisions which we think need to be made.

- Girolamo Patengola, presented as "the co-founder of the Brescian Hospital", in reality was only one of the 125 "confratres", councillors of the Hospital.<sup>35</sup> The Annali della Carità would name him as the one who rented a house as a temporary lodging for the orphans collected together by Isabetta Prato.<sup>36</sup> But since his name does not appear in any other document connected with this "luogo pio", his intervention could well have been linked to his role of special councillor of the Hospital for Incurables, which he was exercising during that particular year of 1532. Angela could have encouraged him to undertake some charitable work, but this does not mean, either on her part or on his, that there was necessarily a link with the Divino Amore.
- Giacomo Chizzola was certainly a friend of Bartolomeo Stella. In the Biblioteca Civica of Bergamo we were able to see his report (undated) on the Academy of Rezzato which he sent to Bartolomeo Stella, who had entered the service of Cardinal Reginald Pole <sup>37</sup> and had been away from Brescia about ten years. One cannot say that "he was one of the first collaborators of Bartolomeo Stella", as he was nominated guardian at the Hospital for Incurables only on 3 January 1535. We do not know when he had taken up his duties as "confrater" (from among the council of 125 "confratres" these duties were drawn by lot on a rota basis); but he was certainly not among the first members (we have already shown that he must not be mistaken for the Giovanni Chizzola on the first list of councillors). We are faced here with factors which are both too vague and too generalised to give reasonable backing to the view that Giacomo Chizzola was a member of the Divino Amore.
- Tomaso Gavardo, for his part, was elected "massaro" of the Hospital for Incurables in 1538. He accompanied Chizzola when the latter visited Angela just before she died. This is all we know about him.
- Giacomo Bardinello. It is difficult to prove that "every known fact indicates that Bardinello, to some extent, collaborated with Angela at the luoghi pii". It is true that he had spoken about her with Pandolfo Nassino, recalling her spirit of pen-

<sup>36</sup> Cf. supra, Pt.II, Ch.III, g and note 84.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. supra, Pt.II, Ch.III, b.

<sup>37</sup> Bergamo, Biblioteca Civica, Archivio Silvestri, Carte Stella, scatola 40, n.75.

ance manifested by her fasts.<sup>38</sup> But if Bardinello and Angela had had anything in common regarding the "luoghi pii", how can one explain his total silence about these links? On the other hand, Bardinello could have belonged to the Divino Amore as he had once, in fact, participated, with Nassino, at a meeting of "companions and friends" around Jerome Emiliani. 39 Nassino, however, in his necrologies for Bardinello and Angela, makes no reference to any activity of theirs, exercised together or individually, in the field of charitable work. He draws attention, instead, to something that had happened to him when, in spite of being disabled and crippled in 1536 (he does not say how), he had wanted to undertake the pilgrimage to Loreto with certain companions. During the outward journey, his hand had been miraculously healed; the effects of his other wounds had likewise disappeared, "although the bones did not all go back into place but remained dislocated". "This Master Zoan Jacomo Bardinello was so devout and so honest that every upright person praised him in all things ... He was the companion of many gentlemen, and may God in his mercy receive his soul".40

His necrology, in Nassino's chronicle, comes on the page just opposite Angela's.

- Agostino Gallo. We cannot say that he was appointed "coadjutor to Bartolomeo Stella in the government of the Hospital for Incurables". He was elected Stella's auditor, or as they used to say "massaro", on 3 January 1535. He appears in the Hospital's registers only after he had been in touch with Jerome Emiliani, founder of the Order of Somaschans. It must be remembered, though, that the minutes do not follow each other as regularly as they should in the registers.
- Bartolomeo Biancosi and Stefano Bertazzoli. Their names do not appear "in the registers of the Hospital for Incurables at Salò"; they were, in reality, members of the Confraternity of Charity, started in Salò in 1542, after some of the first Theatines of Cajetan of Thiene<sup>42</sup> had stayed there for a while. Both of them belonged to the "primo colonello". This Confraternity was not involved in working with the incurables or in hospitals, but with seeing to the needs of the poor, to restoring peace in families or in the city, to persuading the dying to receive

<sup>38</sup> NASSINO, Registro, op. cit., f.574.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., f.288.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, ff.573v-574: "benché li ossi non fossero tutti nelli lochi soy ma fora de la persona". "Era questo mastro Zoan Jacomo Bardinello tanto divoto et costumato, che tutti li homini di bene in tutti lo laudavano... Fo compagno de molti gentilhomini, et Dio per sua bontà habia l'anima sua". BENVENUTO BRUNELLI, *Memorie* (1514-1530) published by GUERRINI, *Cronache inedite*, II, pp.49-50, described an itinerary of the pilgrimage to Loreto, giving the mileage of each stage; the outward journey went by Brescia, Ferrara, Ravenna, Cesenatico, Rimini, Senigaglia, Ancona (258 miles), and the return journey by Forlì, Imola, Bologna, Concordia, Mantua, Brescia (170 miles).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup> Libro primo delli Consigli Generali, op. cit., f.20r: "Postremo pro solidanda et calculanda massaria rev.di D. Bartholomei Stella massarii, electi fuere infrascripti duo cives videlicet: Annibal de Castello, Augustinus Gallus".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>42</sup> CISTELLINI, La "Confraternità della Carità" di Salò (1542), in "Rivista di Storia della Chiesa in Italia", anno I, n.3, settembre-dicembre 1947, Istituto Grafico Tiberino, Roma, p.398.

the sacraments, to putting an end to occasions of scandal and sin, and to securing some good lawyer for anyone who needed it but could not afford to pay for one.<sup>43</sup>

 Isabetta Prato. We have already spoken about her collaboration with Laura Gambara as from 1532 probably, with references from the Annali della Carità and Faino's text.<sup>44</sup>

There is some more evidence about a connection between these two women in the 1534 "polizza d'estimo": <sup>45</sup> "Item I have received from Dame Laura de Gambara 25 scuti which are equivalent to 85 lire". But the last evidence known to date is the mention of Laura Gambara and Isabetta Bargnani in the Bull of 1535, <sup>46</sup> which presupposes a petition sent from Brescia between 1533 and the first months of 1535.

Let it be noted, however, that the orphanage must have already ceased to be autonomous with regard to the shelter for penitent women (and so Isabetta Prato with regard to Laura Gambara) by November 1532, when the penitents and orphans were brought together "in the house of messer Marc'Antonio Bombardiero which was situated above the piazza of the Duomo".<sup>47</sup>

Neither Faino nor the *Annali* say when the transfer took place from here to the property bequeathed by Laura Gambara to the "Carità" in 1537.<sup>48</sup> Faino does not say anything either about when, once the "convento della Carità" had been established, Laura "decided to live there herself and to take charge of those souls ... the number of which increased in such a way that by 1533 there were seventy of them, among whom there were even some virgins who had taken refuge there to escape from the danger of becoming prostitutes ... Over all these, the Countess Laura carried out the office of superior, mother, guardian and governess".<sup>49</sup>

It looks as if there was no further room for Isabetta Bargnani-Prato to continue exercising any kind of management role with them. Everything points to the view that her work of collaboration did not extend beyond 1538. In the two years which followed, Angela would count her among the matrons to whom she entrusted her newly-founded Company. Angela could well have helped her with her advice during her apostolic activity.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup> "Capitoli e membri della Congregazione di Carità di Salò (1542)", ibid., pp.398-406.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. supra, Pt.II, Ch.III, g.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>45</sup> PE, n.110 and n.231: "Item ho hauto dala signora Lavora da Gambara scuti 25 che buta lire 85".

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>46</sup> Bull "Regimini" of 3 August 1535. Cf. supra, Pt.II, Ch.III, g.
 <sup>47</sup> Cf. supra, ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>49</sup> FAINO, "Della Serva di Dio", quoted in *Brescia Beata*, op. cit., f.413. Laura "personalmente vi si ridusse a vivere et governare quelle anime... Delle quali crebbe tanto il numero, che del 1533 si trovarono sino a settanta, tra le quali v'erano pur anche alcune vergini, quivi ricorse per fuggire il pericolo di prostituir se stesse... Sopra tutte queste, faceva la contessa Laura l'officio di superiora, di madre, di custode e di governatrice".

### d) The Confraternity of the Most Holy Trinity

On 27 April 1526, the Bull of Clement VII "Illius qui pro dominici gregis salvatione" gave permission for the establishment of the "Confraternitas utriusque sexus Christifidelium sub invocatione Sanctissimae Trinitatis et Caritatis in Civitate Brixiensi".

In setting out the terms of the petition, the Pope mentions the fact that the Councillors and the Commune had accepted into the confraternity "quam plurimos utriusque sexus Christifideles similibus zelo et devotione accensos in Confratres... et in unum librum omnes describi et annotari fecerunt in quo quasi omnes cives Civitatis... et multi forenses descripti existunt quasi innumerabiles".

The Pope recalls that the election had been made of upright men called Councillors, chosen from among the most able "pro guberno et conservatione confraternitatis et piorum operum bonorum", who had even drawn up the Statutes and fixed the duties.

The Confratelli, at present, "incurabiles recepi, hospitari, curari, benigneque et caritative tractari facere coeperunt prout indies faciunt"; <sup>50</sup> they work in the Major Hospital, while seeing to the construction of their own hospital, so as to be able to alleviate the needs of the poor incurables. And for this building they have already paid out more than 1,500 ducats, and are ready to pay 15,000 and even more.

And so the Pope grants some spiritual benefits "rectoribus, gubernatoribus, administratoribus, oeconomis, servitoribus, familiaribus, ministris, infirmis et aliis personis in eis nunc et pro tempore existentibus et pro pauperibus ac infirmis curandis ac aliis miserabilibus personis gubernandis vel subveniendis pauperibus et infirmis inibi pro tempore degentibus", while setting out the conditions necessary for acquiring the indulgences: confession at least once a year, with the intention of visiting the church and praying before the altar of the said hospital during Holy Week; and the payment of an annual subsidy "pro aedificatione, perfectione, reparatione, constructione, conservatione, manutentione et augmento hospitalis coepti Sanctissimae Trinitatis bonorum, illiusque ecclesiae et locorum pauperum ac aliorum inibi aedificandorum fabrica, necnon pauperum infirmorum et miserabilium personarum bonorum subventione, alimonia et rebus, ac extensis ad id faciendum manus porexerunt adiutrices, seu aliquam elemosinam pro eisdem piis operibus caritativis exercendis in capsa inibi pro elemosinis pro tempore deputata miserint, aut in capsa praedicta posuerint vel poni seu mitti fecerint; aut si infirmi, senes, valetudinarii, mulieres pregnantes, vel alias imbecilles, seu impediti fuerint, suas similes elemosinas per alium vel alios ad id miserint, et in dicta capsa reponi fecerint, plenariam omnium et singulorum suorum peccatorum indulgentiam et remissione ad instar Iubilei, per octo annos continuos proxime futuros a data praesentium computandos, consequantur qui vero, singulis diebus totius anni, in eadem capsa Hospitalis Sanctissimae

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>50</sup> From the context it is to be noted that the "petition" for this Bull had been sent after the General Council of Brescia had assigned a piece of land for the hospital which was to be erected.

Trinitatis bonorum aliquam vel aliquas elemosinam vel elemosinas posuerint vel miserint, aut poni seu mitti fecerint; aut curam vel solicitudinem gubernationis regiminis, vel administrationis aut rerum vel servitii, seu negociorum Hospitalis Sanctissimae Trinitatis, vel illius ecclesiae aut fabricae aedificiorum, vel conservationis et augmenti praedictorum, gesserint aut eisdem pauperibus vel infirmis subvenerint, vel serviverint, omnes et singulas indulgentias et peccatorum remissiones etiam plenarias perpetuo consequantur, quas consequerentur si Archihospitali Sancti Jacobi et Hospitali Campisancti praedictis eorumque ecclesiae elemosinas porrigerent...".<sup>51</sup>

We wanted to reproduce this long passage because it enables us to understand the functions of the "Confratres" of the Most Holy Trinity. It set out for them many ways in which their zeal could find full scope, from tasks involved with government and administration to those connected with some form of service, including financing or contributing some modest sum, without excluding any kind of service and without laying down any specific or systematic task.

The enthusiastic zeal of the early days, inevitably, would languish. On 28 May 1536, "quia hominum negotia et minima charitas reddunt homines in bonis operibus frigidiores, et ad onera subeunda tardiores", the quorum required for the validity of decisions had to be reduced from 125 to 40.<sup>52</sup> In 1548, as we have already said, the Hospital for Incurables ceased functioning as such, to become the Hospital for Women.<sup>53</sup>

51 Documenti Fondazione Spedali Civili, Diplomatico 2º cit.

53 Cf. supra, note 21.

<sup>52</sup> Libro Primo delli Consigli Generali, op. cit., the minutes of 28 May 1536, f.20v.

# Chapter VI THE LAST TEN YEARS

The last ten years of Angela Merici's life opened with a noteworthy occurrence, a transfer of short duration from Brescia to Cremona. This move would bring Angela into contact with the court of Francesco Sforza II, which was already established there. But the principal event was the setting up of the Company of St Ursula a few years before her death, an event which marked the summit of Angela's apostolic action, which put the seal on the call God had made her aware of when she was young. We will deal with this in the next chapter. Here we will try and follow Angela in her last moves and in her last illness up to her death, enriching what is traditionally known about these with the help of some new documents, one of which, in particular, unknown up to now, is of capital importance.

### 1. AT CREMONA

After the Peace of Cambrai, on 3 August 1529, which put an end to three years of hostility between Francis I and Charles V, the Emperor came to Italy to assert his authority and to receive the imperial crown from the hands of Clement VII. After a stop at Genoa, where Andrea Doria had laid the foundation of a pro-Spanish policy by inflicting an irreparable blow on the French, Charles V, then at the pinnacle of his power, made arrangements to reach Bologna, passing through Piacenza. And so, relates Gallo, "the Emperor Charles V had come to Piacenza to be crowned, which was done, and it was feared that he would lay siege to Brescia seeing that he was the enemy of our most illustrious Signori".

Agostino Gallo, his wife Cecilia and his sister Ippolita, fearing the danger, had taken shelter at Cremona and had offered hospitality to Angela. Girolamo Patengola also formed part of the group of refugees.

<sup>1</sup> Processo Nazari, D16.

The journey probably took place at the end of September, because the Emperor had reached Piacenza on the 22nd of that month. It was in the course of that journey that Gallo had the opportunity of discovering his guest's human gifts of tact and of "piacevolezza", so much so that he confessed: "I was forever captivated by her". His sister was already on friendly terms with Angela, going back even to the time of her marriage, but after she had been left a widow, she had become even more attached to her.

In their residence, near San Vittore, Gallo had seen all kinds of visitors come crowding in "from morning until evening", and not only ordinary folk, but also members of the court of Francesco Maria Sforza, nobles from Milan and from Cremona, all fascinated by Angela's word and led to conversion by her. Gallo remembered some of those who had been converted, some of whom were already dead by the time of the "Processo Nazari", but there were others still alive, in Milan as well as in Cremona, and they had persevered in the new way of life which they had undertaken under Angela's guidance. In the circumstances she could well have renewed her acquaintance with the Duke, who had entrusted himself and his Duchy to her prayers.

On 24 February 1530, Charles V was crowned in San Petronio of Bologna; Francesco Sforza had his title to the Duchy of Milan reconfirmed (not without paying a very large ransom); the Gonzagas had their ducal title recognised; Cervia and Ravenna were restored to the Pope. All these events helped to defuse certain pockets of tension and to usher in a period of peace, thanks to which the refugees were able to return

home.

In the meantime, however, something had happened which had given Angela's hosts new cause for concern: she had fallen seriously ill. This decline in her physical strength could have been due in some way to the intensity of her prayers and penances, which she had certainly increased at that time in order to obtain peace for the princes and the Christian people.

The illness must have got worse and appeared to be hopeless; the end seemed so imminent that Girolamo Patengola composed the follow-

ing lines as an epitaph to be inscribed on her tomb:

"Here lies buried one who in name, In deed and in word, was an Angel. She lived a virginal life in a silent cell, Enjoying there true interior peace. The beloved and obedient handmaid of God, She spurned all that was pleasing to the senses. And now, in heavenly bliss, with a crown of palms, She lives in happiness among the Angels".2

The episode that followed throws light on one aspect of Girolamo's personality, namely a certain naïvety, a "Fioretti" innocence. Angela's young friend and follower had read these lines to the dying "Madre", almost as his "good-bye" to her as she approached the threshold of eternity. But the incident also throws into relief an aspect of Angela's temperament, namely a certain immediate reaction, a lively emotion which expressed itself in a quick and energetic gesture. Gallo relates: "... and suddenly she sat up, and thinking that this would truly be the case, she spoke so passionately for at least half an hour about the joys of that heavenly kingdom, that her face remained lit up as if she had been a cherub". This scene is described by an eye-witness, and one senses that he evokes it as if reliving it.

In the room full of visitors, Angela, at the prospect of the beatitude awaiting her, and with a foretaste of the joy of possessing it, recovered her physical strength. Then, realising that she had been cured, she burst into tears and blamed Girolamo as if he had wanted to deceive her. This emotional behaviour, typically Mediterranean, recalls other acts, apparently unpremeditated, but which reveal quickness and clearness of decision: Angela washing her hair with a mixture of ashes and bleach; Angela throwing a handful of sand on the salad of flowers; Angela without hesitation repulsing the devil enveloped in light; Angela abandoning Venice on the very day she was invited to remain, afraid that she would be forced to stay on there.

Gallo does not fail to mention how medicines had an unusual effect on her, and how the most efficacious ones for her health were leeks and onions. In the circumstances, however, this recovery must have greatly astonished those present and certainly added to Angela's reputation for sanctity.

We know nothing more definite about this illness or about how long it lasted. We do not even know the length of the stay at Cremona. We only know that, on their return to Brescia, Agostino Gallo offered Angela hospitality in his own house in the San Clemente district, where he had prepared two rooms specially for her. Afterwards Angela moved, first near to San Barnaba before settling in a house belonging to the Canons Regular of the Lateran, next to St Afra and near the public fountain. It can be assumed that she was already living there in 1532, as

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

it was in that year that she expressly asked to be buried in that church after her death.<sup>4</sup>

In August 1532, Angela took up her pilgrim's staff once again and set out for Varallo a second time. As we have already said, Agostino Gallo and his sister Ippolita accompanied her. His wife's absence is explained by the fact that on 10 July their first baby, Eugenia Isidora Josepha, had been baptised at San Clemente.' According to Faino, the first virgins of the Company were also in the party. As for Gallo, he says nothing at all about this, and we will come back to the subject in the next chapter. On her return to Brescia, Angela courageously set about founding the Company of St Ursula.

#### 2. THE PRELIMINARIES OF THE FOUNDATION

They certainly go back to a much earlier period. The message received during the vision at Brudazzo must have sounded very obscure to Angela's mind, at least with regard to the time and the manner of putting it into effect. No-one, however, has ever doubted its premonitory significance. Landini <sup>7</sup> had gathered the memory of it from the lips of the first followers of the "Madre"; Cozzano <sup>8</sup> refers more than once to God's explicit order; Bellintani <sup>9</sup> makes a clear reference to it, and all the oral tradition, all the iconographic tradition flowing from it, are a confirmation of this premonition.

As a young woman consecrated to God but living in the world, Angela had lived in a very unsettled period because of the dangers arising from the political and social situation, a period eroded by laxity and heresy, and yet alive with a new ferment and generous impulses. Her past experience must have made her ever more aware of the position of women, ever more anxious to intervene, with the strength of the Spirit who was guiding her.

The poor had knocked on her door, also the learned and the noble, bringing with them the sorrows of their daily life, the rare joys that came their way, the problems that worried families faced with their children's future.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Cf. infra, 2.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> GIOVAN MARIA MAZZUCHELLI, Notizie interno alla Vita, op. cit., note on f.22.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> About this particular fact, cf. infra, Pt.II, Ch.VII, 3.b.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> D15.

<sup>8</sup> D22, D23, D24.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> BELLINTANI, Vita, op. cit., BQ, ms.B.VI.30, f.[11r-v].

Angela was aware of the frequent conflict between the custom that wanted a daughter behind a grille or married, and the hidden longings for a fully consecrated life outside the cloister, which many of the young women who approached her carried in their heart. The Third Order of St Francis, to which Angela belonged, did not in itself involve a lifelong commitment to virginity, and so did not offer any guarantee against possible pressure from parents and suitors to marry. In addition, she must have found the means of reciprocal support which it provided insufficient to safeguard the perseverance of those young girls and women who were placed sometimes in a servile position with employers, who were not always respectful of their good resolutions. An adequate structure was lacking, with a juridical value of its own, its own statutes and its own rights.

And so, from a primordial intuition and as a result of the confidences Angela received, a programme of life emerged and gradually took shape, which would be codified in the Rule and would take on

flesh in the "Company of St Ursula".

At this point – probably the beginning of 1532 – Angela took a positive step which, while certainly not intended as a break with the Third

Order of St Francis, nevertheless signalled a certain separation.

1532 is the date, in fact, of the transcription which we discovered in the ASV, of a petition <sup>10</sup> in which "Angela from Salò", Franciscan tertiary of the diocese of Brescia, asked the Sacred Apostolic Penitentiary to be dispensed from the prescription regarding her burial in a Franciscan church, preferring the church of St Afra "ob devotionem suam erga Ecclesiam Sanctorum Faustini et Iovite alias Sancte Aphre Brixien". She added, however, "in dicta aut quavis alia Ecclesia prout forsan tunc sua devotio expostulaverit...", thus indicating an alternative connected, no doubt, with another of her devotions. Did Angela hope one day to repose in a church of the Company? We do not know.

The "Apostolic Letter" of the Grand Penitentiary, Cardinal Antonio Pucci, dated 2 November 1532, granted Angela her request. This letter is lost. We know about it from Lombardi, who had seen it in the Archives of the Company of St Ursula at Brescia, and had copied and published it in the *Vita della B. Angela* which he wrote, using a punctuation which is not usually found in documents of this type, and giving it the title "Bulla Apostolica pro Sur Angela, quod possit sepeliri in

ASV, Diversa Sacrae Penitentiariae Clementis P.P. VII, anno IX, 1532, Reg.79. f.s.n. D8.

<sup>12</sup> LOMBARDI, Vita, op. cit., p.133 note.

Ecclesia S. Afre". The document, however, is neither a Bull nor a Brief,

but a Letter of the Sacred Apostolic Penitentiary.

In drawing up this petition, Angela was not renouncing her membership of the Third Order; the Rule, moreover, made it impossible for her to do so: "Ordinamus praeterea statuentes, ut nullus post ipsius Fraternitatis ingressum de eadem egredi valeat ad saeculum reversurus: possit tamen transitum habere liberum ad Religionem aliam approbatam". She would continue being called Sur Angela, she would wear the Franciscan habit up to her death, and she would be buried in it. But at the same time she would assume a position somewhat distant from the Franciscans with regard to herself, and even more so with regard to her daughters, for the sake of this new form of consecrated life which she was going to establish in the world and for which she would very soon obtain approval from the competent authority, in other words, from the episcopal authority.

For the time being, Angela confined herself to forming the future members of the Company by gathering small groups of them round her, in the little room next to St Afra where conditions were probably far from favourable. This is where Isabetta Prato intervened, by putting at the disposal of the nascent Company a large room in her house in the Cathedral square, as we have already mentioned in the pages devoted to her. It is not clear who had had the frescoes painted in this room or who had painted them. Bernardino Faino <sup>14</sup> has left quite a detailed description of these paintings, which he had still been able to see in the 17th century, but by then they had already been restored. This fact must not be underrated, as it lessens the value of the description handed down

by Faino.

The main themes of these mural paintings were dear to Angela, and taken together they had a definite didactic purpose, with the virgins of the Company in mind: in a central position, serving as an altar-piece, there was the picture of Christ crucified, surrounded by hosts of weeping angels; then came the scenes of the Annunciation, the Nativity, Jesus in the Temple, the Assumption of Mary. There were in addition the saints: Faustinus, Jovita and Afra, patrons of the city and of the church near which Angela was living; Paula and Eustochium on a ship at the mercy of the fury of the sea, a memory perhaps of the pilgrimage to the Holy Land and of the dangers of the return journey; St Ursula on a ship,

13 Nicholas IV, Bull "Supra montem", Ch.II, p.94.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> FAINO, "Descrittione dell'Oratorio, nel quale la Beata Madre Angela diede principio alla sua Compagnia di S. Orsola", in *Miscellanea*, BQ, ms.K.VI.1, ff.35r-37r [102r-104r].

carrying the standard of virginity and of martrydom; St Elizabeth of Hungary, in one panel helping some virgins who were unwinding the distaff and spinning, and in a second panel serving eight virgins at table. Faino writes: "It is likely that the Blessed Angela had this picture done ... out of the devotion she had for St Elizabeth, who was wearing the same habit as herself and had made the same profession, and also out of the devotion that the said Dame Hisabetta Prata had for the Saint whose name she carried ...".<sup>15</sup>

St Elizabeth of Hungary was not portrayed, however, among the poor and the infirm, as one would have expected from the history of her life and the legends which had sprung up round her. This painting of her surrounded by young girls could have been in recognition of Isabetta Prato's work with the little orphan-girls of the "Carità" during those years.

Among all the pictures there, one would have also expected to see one of St Catherine of Alexandria ("St Catherine of the Wheel", as she used to be called in the region), who was one of the saints most frequently represented at the time of the Renaissance, and whose name far exceeded any other as a Christian name for girls. But such a picture was missing. We put forward a suggestion for this absence: in Faino's time, one of the pictures was so damaged ("del tutto guasto") that he could not even decipher what it was supposed to be. Would this, perhaps, have been the picture dedicated to St Catherine of Alexandria?

One of the frescoes, still according to Faino, carried the date "Die II Decembris MDXXXIII", which we read as the "second" day of De-

cember and not the "eleventh" as understood by Doneda.16

One feature mentioned by Faino is clearly anachronistic, namely the way the women in the paintings were dressed. Afra, Paula and Eustochium, and the virgins served by Elizabeth, were all wearing "the black habit of the Ursulines, but without the cincture". One point must be made clear. When Faino visited the oratory and described it, it had already been restored at the expense of the notary Giambattista Bianchi. The latter had become owner of it at the time of his marriage to the young Isabella, daughter of Andrea Malgarotti (a wealthy cattle-owner who came from Sonico di Valtrompia), and had settled there in 1621.<sup>17</sup>

Giambattista had immediately taken steps to get the house and the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Ibid., "È credibile che la Beata Angela ordinasse questo quadro... per la divotione che haveva a Santa Elisabetta, del cui habito et professione ella stessa era, et per la divotione che le haveva ancora la sudetta signora Hisabetta Prata per tenere il nome di essa stessa Santa...".
<sup>16</sup> DONEDA, Vita, op. cit., p.71.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> GUERRINI, Cronache bresciane inedite, vol.IV, Brescia 1931, premessa ai Diari dei Bianchi, pp.41-42.

oratory restored, and had entrusted the work to the painter Bernardino Gandino. He wrote in his *Diario*, in fact, on 22 May: "Sig. Bernardino Gandino has finished painting my room with landscape scenes; the kitchen garden and pergola are also finished ...; and painting has begun on the chapel; it is being renovated and restored with many improvements ...". We do not know what criteria the painter followed in carrying out this commission and even more in restoring the pictures "with many improvements", but it seems right to cast some doubt on the subject, precisely on account of this "black habit of the Ursulines" seen by Faino.

Angela's Rule, in fact, had prescribed neither black nor the same colour, nor the same kind of dress for everyone. It was the revised Rule of Cardinal Borromeo that had imposed the black habit, the shawl of linen material which covered the shoulders and front, the black shoes, as well as the long leather cincture. By Faino's time, the habit had been fixed down to every detail, just like a uniform which he describes in some notes, addressed to some unknown person and entitled: "Response to some points proposed in the letters": black habit, shawl (called either "pectoral" or "humeral") with the points behind and in front reaching the waist and pleated like a priest's rochet, "however, much simpler and quite plain"; simple bonnet of white material covered by a white veil; black leather cincture about an inch wide, without a buckle, hanging down to the hem of the dress; white, yellow or orange stockings, black shoes. It was to all extent and purpose a religious dress.

Did the restorer of the chapel, influenced by the uniform dress which the Ursulines of Brescia were wearing, change the original colours to black? We do not know the answer to this, but one thing is certain: the paintings described by the superior of the Company are not the ones

which the first virgins of St Ursula had seen.

The fact that the saints and the virgins were shown not wearing the cincture, as was the case with the members of the Company at the time of Angela, might have led Faino to believe, on the other hand, that the pictures had simply been touched up.

Regola della Compagnia di S. Orsola di Brescia di nuovo revista, corretta et confirmata da Mons. Ill.mo Carlo Cardinale di S. Prassede..., Brescia, appresso Pietro Maria Marchetti, 1582, cap.2, p.11. FAINO, Miscellanea, op. cit., "Note varie per la biografia", ff.9r-18v [146r-155v]; cf. also Vita,

op. cit., pp.68-72.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> GIO. BATTISTA BIANCHI, *Diario*, in GUERRINI, *Cronache*, *op. cit.*, vol.IV, p.142: "Fu compito di dipingere la mia camera, fattovi i paesi dal Sig. Bernardino Gandino, et fu finito d'accomodar l'horto et lobia... et s'incomincia a dipingere la ghiesola et a rinnovarla et risarcirla con molti miglioramenti...".

On 19 June 1621, a Saturday, continues the chronicle of Giovan Battista Bianchi, "thanks to my diligence, the restoration work in the oratory was completed and the following inscription was set up there to recall that here the Blessed Angela Merici of Desenzano, whose body is still lying intact in the crypt of St Afra, used to pray often and almost continuously, and that here she instituted her order of the 'Demesse' by assembling them together under her government in this place; this room was levelled down and almost destroyed by some ignorant people who turned it into a kind of kitchen:

'Beata Angela Merica
Brixianarum virginum speculum immaculatum
hic primum
sacras virgines seculares
divino instinctu sapientissime instituit
propriaeque virtutis fulgentissimis radiis illustravit
hic sepissime commorando.
Coruerant penitus iniuria temporum et hominum
hae sacrae parvulae aediculae.
Joannens Baptista Blancus
tanto numini devinctissimus
aere proprio perenni cultu
pientissime
restauravit' ".21

In his "Descrittione dell'oratorio", from which we have taken the themes of the pictures, <sup>22</sup> Faino gives a very rough version of this inscription, making it shorter without saying that he has made an extract from it. As for Doneda, he keeps closer to the text in Bianchi's *Diario*, but without following it word for word. <sup>23</sup> It must be noted, though, that by his time there was nothing left of this time-honoured place and we do not know the source of his version of the epigraph. In 1732, in fact, the last fresco, the one that was serving as an altar-piece, had been painted over in whitewash. Visiting the former oratory in 1765, Carlo Doneda noticed that the whitewash was flaking off easily just where the crucifixion was, revealing underneath the picture painted in oil. <sup>24</sup>

<sup>22</sup> FAINO, Miscellanea, "Note varie", op. cit., f.36r [103r].

24 Ibid., p.145.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Diari Bianchi, op. cit., pp.144-145: "fu compìto di restaurare l'oratorio nostro per mia industria, ponendovi l'inscrittione seguente per memoria che ivi la B. Angela Merici da Desenzano, il cui corpo intiero riposa ancora in S. Afra nella chiesa sotterranea, faceva spessissime et quasi continuamente oratione, et che ivi instituì il suo ordine delle Demesse, radunandovele a' suoi ordini; qual loco era spianato et quasi distrutto per l'ignoranza di gente che vi facevano quasi la cosina". The date MDCXXI given by Faino is missing here.

<sup>23</sup> DONEDA, Vita, op. cit., p.145.

#### 3. THE LAST YEARS

Angela's last years were spent largely either in the oratory by the Cathedral square or in the rooms at St Afra, where she had installed herself.<sup>25</sup> But it was in the oratory that Angela used to assemble together the young women and even some middle-aged unmarried women who aspired to enter the Company of St Ursula. She also used to meet some widows of noble birth there, some of whom were very young, getting them interested in her foundation project and preparing them for positions of responsibility in the Company.

### a) At St Afra

Bellintani relates how, in order to construct the fortifications of the city and to enlarge the outer walls, it had been necessary to demolish the convent of Santo Salvatore. The Canons Regular of the Lateran who used to inhabit it, had received the church of St Afra in exchange. They had had the old building razed to the ground and had constructed a new one, with a large chapel dedicated to the relics of the martyrs in the crypt. The Canons of the Lateran were held in high esteem in Brescian ecclesiastical circles, and Angela had chosen her own confessor, Father Serafino of Bologna <sup>27</sup> from among their number, as stated by Faino. <sup>28</sup>

At St Afra, Angela had a woman companion, according to the testimony of Doneda who had gathered this information from the books of the Company of St Ursula: "... a good maiden, by the name of Barbara Fontana, who survived her, although only for a short time, and who would have been able, as a faithful witness, to provide some details about Angela's life after her death".<sup>29</sup> It was perhaps as a result of her evidence that Landini had been able to write: "During the time of prayer,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> A cadastral search still needs to be made on the exact location of the "casetta di S. Angela" next to St Afra.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> BELLINTANI, Vita, op. cit., BQ, ms.B.VI.30, f.[15v]; Monumenta, p.93.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> GABRIELE PENNOTTO ex Congregatione Lateranense: Generalis Totius Sacri Ordinis Clericorum Canonicorum Historia Tripartita, Romae, ex Typographia Camerae Apostolicae. 1624. Pars III. p.794: "Seraphinus Bononiensis, optimae vitae sacerdos et erga Sacratissimam Virginem Deiparam peculiariter devotus, scripsit illius vitam ex sacris Evangeliis et aliis probatis auctoribus, cui praemisit titulum: Paradisus Delitiarium spiritualium, multis documentis spiritualibus exornatam; editus est liber Bononiae anno 1562". Quoted in LEDÓCHOWSKA, Angela, op. cit., I, p.81.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> FAINO, Miscellanea, "Copiate le seguenti memorie dal Registro Rosso della Compagnia di Sant'Orsola", f.[166].

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> DONEDA, *Vita, op. cit.*, p.53 and p.142; "una buona vergine di nome Barbara Fontana, la quale a lei sopravisse, quantunque per breve tempo, e avrà potuto come testimonio fedele riferire dopo la di lei morte almeno qualche particolarità della sua vita".

her body was seen lifted in the air".30

We found no mention of this Barbara Fontana in any document of that period. Cozzano mentions a Barbara among Angela's first followers, but he does not give the surname.<sup>31</sup>

We discovered, though, among the witnesses to the chapter of Angela's election, a Giovan Pietro Fontana, shoemaker, who was living in the district of St Afra.<sup>32</sup> Angela must have thought highly of him, because on the front page of the Office book that had belonged to her one could read these words: "Office of the venerable Madre Sur Angela which is mine since her death, because she had promised it to me, Zan Piero Fontana". He was probably Barbara's father, if Angela had promised him her Office book.

The presence of a companion living with Angela is also confirmed by Bellintani,<sup>34</sup> Gondi,<sup>35</sup> Faino <sup>36</sup> and by Doneda <sup>37</sup> in connection with the visit that Angela had received from her nephew Tracagni of Salò and with another one from a canon of S. Nazaro, a relative of hers. In both cases Angela had announced to her companion the identity of the visitor before she had seen him. These two incidents were repeated several times in the course of the processes.

This "living together" was also in the spirit of the Rule which Angela had proposed to her daughters; as far as possible they were not to be left alone in life, especially when they were getting old or were in precarious health.

We do not know if the first admission of the twenty-eight virgins who entered the Company on 25 November 1535 took place at St Afra or in the oratory of Isabetta Prato, since we do not possess any document that gives this information. We do know, though, where the first chapter of the Company was held, namely that of 18 March 1537, for the election of the legal representative and mother general in the person of the "Madre Sur Angela". The notarial act states it clearly: "in coquina domus habitationis D. Sur Angele... site in contrata Sancte Afre et iuris Sancte Afre Brixie".

This was the most solemn of the assemblies held during Angela's lifetime. Afterwards the Company would follow an untroubled rhythm

<sup>30</sup> D15.

<sup>31</sup> D24, [f.974r].

D6.

<sup>33</sup> APC, Vat. 340, f.705v, D10.

<sup>34</sup> BELLINTANI, Vita, op. cit., Monumenta, pp.87-88.

<sup>35</sup> GONDI, Vita, op. cit., pp.26-27.

FAINO, Vita, op. cit., pp.39-40.
 DONEDA, Vita, op. cit., p.68.

of life until the death of the "Madre", with an ever-increasing number of recruits. In a short time, as Nazari states in the *Vita*, the number of members would reach one hundred and fifty.

### b) The death

The Foundress' strength declined. Between 1539 and 1540 <sup>38</sup> she fell ill, and Giacomo Chizzola<sup>39</sup> went to visit her, taking with him a friend, Tomaso Gavardo, who came from a rich, noble family.<sup>40</sup> Angela must have known him, if only because Tomaso had in his house a maid-servant called Margarita di Sopraponte, a member of the Company of St Ursula.

Recalling this visit, Chizzola relates that Angela had talked to him about how to live a Christian life. Just before leaving, Tomaso Gavardo had begged her to give him some spiritual advice and she had said to him: "Do during life what you would like to have done at the time of death".<sup>41</sup>

It was about this period that Angela dictated to Cozzano her spiritual Testament addressed to the matrons or lady-governors of the Company, and her Counsels addressed to the local superiors or "colonelle". With an eye to the future and with a really prophetic intuition, Angela had a presentiment of the storms which would shake the Company; she foresaw the risk of division and made her final appeal for unity, for perseverance, and for fidelity to the Church and to the institution; she found words that were both inspired and profoundly human to exhort the superiors to love their spiritual daughters and to devote themselves to their work of forming, governing and giving them spiritual guidance. In this way she entrusted her very last message to the Counsels and to the Testament.

Angela had been taken seriously ill during her stay at Cremona, but for the rest of her life there is no mention of any serious illness. However, she must have suffered from some physical weakness since she had had to have recourse to doctors. It is Agostino Gallo who tells us how

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p.81 and p.152.

<sup>&</sup>quot; D16.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>40</sup> PE, n.65, 1534. His father Stefano was dead. In 1534, Tomaso lived with his mother Caterina; his sister-in-law Antonia also lived in the same house with her four children. Living in the house likewise was the priest Hector de Palazzolo, "employed as a tutor and to say mass for Dame Caterina", as well as two house-servants and three maid-servants.

<sup>41</sup> D16.

disconcerted they were when they applied the usual remedies and discovered that she reacted to the medicines with unexpected results.<sup>42</sup> From this testimony one could gather that she suffered from ailments quite frequently, but we do not know anything more definite about them to make any kind of diagnosis, not even about her last illness.

In their writings, Bellintani, Gondi and Faino all said that, anticipating the end, Angela had wanted to wash herself so that no-one would have to do it after her death, and they had seized the opportunity to extol her "virginal modesty". 43 Doneda thinks this particular detail is highly unlikely as it implies that, in spite of being seriously ill, the "Madre" had been left alone in the house. And Doneda adds that even if she had been surprised by her nephew while she was washing her hair (this was one of the remedies which used to afford her some relief), this did not mean that she had taken a bath in order to avoid being washed after death.44

Both Bellintani and Gondi made another mistake when they said that the news of Angela's illness had been given out by the preacher during the homily in the Cathedral on Good Friday, which that particular year fell on 26 March; at the same time Bellintani made Angela die on the 16th and Gondi on the 21st of that month, but she had died, in fact, on 27 January 1540.

The first to be mistaken about Angela's death had been Agostino Gallo, who at the "Processo Nazari" had declared that it had taken place on 12 March 1540. Nazari and Bellintani followed him, while Gondi (and it could have been a printing error) wrote 21 March. 45 This is the date which was taken by later biographers in France, Germany, Flanders and Spain, until Faino re-established the correct date. The mistake persisted, however, even after 1672 with those authors who did not know Faino, and led to commemorative ceremonies and devotional practices being fixed to that date.

Lombardi provides a comprehensive collection of all the different versions about the day of Angela's death.46

As for Doneda, he cites the documents which give irrefutable proof that the death occurred on 27 January 1540:

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup> BELLINTANI, Vita, op. cit., Monumenta, p.92; GONDI, Vita, op. cit., pp.57-58; FAINO, Vita, op. cit., pp.54-55.

44 DONEDA, Vita, op. cit., pp.82-83 and pp.153-154.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>45</sup> DONEDA also believes that it is a question of the numbers being inverted, due to a printing error. Cf. Vita, op. cit., p.155.

<sup>46</sup> LOMBARDI, Vita, op. cit., pp.126-131.

- the Registro of Pandolfo Nassino, who devotes a page to the necrology "de Sur Anzola di Merichi" and leaves another page blank, perhaps with the intention, not carried out, of adding some further information; <sup>47</sup>

- the Office of Our Lady which Angela used; on the first page was written: "On the 27th day of January 1540, at 21 and a half hours on this Tuesday, Madre Sor Angiela passed away"; 48

- the small book in which the names of the first virgins of the Company had been inscribed, and which had on the frontispiece: "Madre Sur An-

zola left this life on the 27th day of January 1540"; 49

- the Secondo Libro Generale which says on page 40: "The Reverend and blessed Suor Angela, who instituted this Company in the month of November 1535, died on 27 January 1540"; 49 bis

- the Libro de la Compagnia de Santa Ursula de le defunte de la Compagnia verzene (those who have died) which has the note: "Madre sore Anzola died on 27 January of the year 1540, her death she had foretold ... died

our Madre sore Anzola and she had predicted her death".50

We think one further document could be added to this list:

– the will of Ginevra Luzzago, a parchment copy of which we found in the State Archives of Milan; it was among the papers which came from the monastery of St Afra.<sup>51</sup>

The will, published by the notary Girolamo Zanetti on 18 September 1558 at the request of the testatrix, had been dictated in front of seven witnesses by Ginevra, "sana mente et intellectu, licet corpore languens, volens de bonis suis disponere ne inter posteros suos lis oriatur".

"Inprimis animam suam omnipotenti Deo et beatissimae Virgini Mariae ac toti curiae caelesti humiliter comendavit, item legavit, et voluit corpus suum sepelliri in ecclesia Sanctae Affrae civitatis Brixiae". And Ginevra had left to this same church a legacy of 306 lire planete for a definite purpose: the canons were to arrange for a priest always to be available there to read the Rule to the members of the Company, to administer the sacraments and to celebrate every year "unam missam solemnem cum divinis officiis in ecclesia praedicta, et quolibet die vigesimo sep-

<sup>48</sup> Cf. also D10.

67r; and Inventario Registri n.56; D32.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup> DONEDA, Vita, op. cit., pp.156-157; NASSINO, Registro, op. cit., pp.574-575; D7.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>49</sup> Cf. infra, Pt.III, Ch.I, Appendix Note. "La Madre Sur Anzola pasò da questa Vita a dì 27 Zenar 1540".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>49b</sup> "La Rda et beata Suor Angela, la quale instituite la detta Compagnia del mese di Novembre 1535. Et morse alli 27 Zenaro 1540".

 <sup>50</sup> Ibid. "La Madre sore Anzola morite a dì 27 di Zenaro del 40, de la sua morte lei predise la morte sua... morite la nostra Madre sore Anzola et la predise la sua morte".
 51 ASM, Fondo di Religione registro n.223 Brescia S. Affra alias S Salvatore (Lateranensi), pp.66v-

timo januarii perpetuis temporibus in remedium animae ipsius magnificae dominae testatricis, sub poena privationis praesentis legati...". The other wishes of the sick woman follow, but we only want to draw attention to this one: Ginevra Luzzago does not ask for mass and divine office to be said on the anniversary day of her own death, as is the custom, but on 27 January. She does not give any reason for her choice, but it is clear that it is a homage paid to the friendship and the devotion she had for the "Madre".

Among the witnesses required by custom for this nuncupative will there was a doctor, Girolamo Gardone, who perhaps was attending Dame Ginevra. Angela also is said to have been attended by Doctor Gardone, and it is Gondi who gives us this particular information.<sup>52</sup> This confirms our hypothesis that it was from Alessandro Luzzago that Gondi had learnt about certain events which had remained fixed in the family's memory.<sup>53</sup>

Angela died on Tuesday, 27 January 1540, at "21 and a half hours", in other words, given the season, about half past three in the afternoon. Clothed in her tertiary habit and cape, her face enclosed in a wimple and a white veil, she was carried to the church of St Afra the following day at 16 hours, that is ten o'clock in the morning. Pandolfo Nassino wrote her obituary notice, <sup>54</sup> and biographers refer to him when they are trying to fix the date of Angela's birth, basing it on his information that "she was about 65-70 years old". In spite of the inaccuracy in the father's name (Tomaso instead of Giovanni), Nassino's page has the undisputed value of an eye-witness testimony.

For three consecutive nights a brilliant star shone above St Afra; this is a fact over which the biographers are in general agreement.

### c) The burial

"She was left in this said church of St Afra for some days, and in no part of her body was there any decomposition; she was afterwards buried with great honour in a tomb or sepulchre in this church, and this tomb or sepulchre ...". So reads the last part of Nassino's obituary which remained unfinished, for some unknown reason, especially as the words "or sepulchre" are at the top of a page which was certainly intended to complete the portrait only given in outline by the chronicler, but this page remained blank.

54 D7.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>52</sup> GONDI, *Vita, op. cit.*, p.59. <sup>53</sup> Cf. supra, Pt.I, Ch.II, 1.d.

Agostino Gallo takes up the same subject, going into a little more detail,<sup>55</sup> but there is one fact which even he does not explain: Angela, according to him, had been kept for thirty days in an open coffin in the crypt of the church; in spite of that, not only had no bad smell been given off, but her flesh had undergone no corruption and her limbs had retained all the flexibility of a living body.

Canon Tribesco says that the body remained exposed "for several

days", without adding anything else.56

Bellintani is the first to mention openly "a dispute between the Cathedral and the church of St Afra over the question of her body, because these two churches were each trying to secure that holy relic". The Canons of the Cathedral no doubt claimed some right to it on the grounds that the oratory of Isabetta Prato was on their territory, but the

Canons of the Lateran were reclaiming their parishioner.

That a difference of opinions should occur at the moment of burial, and that a dispute should break out between two groups of canons as to which of their churches should possess Angela's mortal remains, can be understood. But the discovery of the indult from the Sacred Apostolic Penitentiary, which made it clear that a Franciscan church was to be excluded and that Angela's preferential choice was for the church of St Afra, settled the question; the body at last could be laid to rest in that church.<sup>58</sup>

We found no trace of this dispute in any other documents, but Doneda had already declared in his time: "The proofs of this quarrel cannot be found". 59

Five years earlier, though, a dispute between the Canons of the Cathedral and those of S. Giovanni Evangelista for less important reasons had caused far more stir, mention being made of it in the order of the day of the General Council of the city of Brescia at its meeting of 6 December 1535.

A few days previously, at the funeral of Lorenzo Patuzzi, the canons of the two churches had quarrelled over the question of the order of precedence to be adopted at the funeral ceremony: "deventum fuit ad rixam; eaque fuit talis et tanta, quae non solum cessit admirationi sed et

<sup>55</sup> D16.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>56</sup> D25.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>57</sup> BELLINTANI, *Vita, op. cit.*, BQ, ms.B.VI.30, f.[20r]; *Monumenta*, p.92. "Una lite nata fra il Duomo et la chiesa di S. Affra per cagion del suo corpo, posciaché qual sacra reliquia procuravano queste due chiese di haverlo".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>58</sup> Cf. supra, 2; D9.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>59</sup> DONEDA, Vita, op. cit., p.86.

malo exemplo et scandalo civitati nostrae". And as the behaviour of these ecclesiastics had been disedifying, "speculum et norma humilitatis, patientiae, bonorum morum et omnis boni exempli", it was decided to charge the public Deputy and the Deputy "supra honestate monasteriorum" to take steps to see that "ne in futurum similia inconvenientia sequi habeant".60

Angela's prestige and renown for sanctity probably prevented the affair from having such noisy repercussions, apart from the long wait in the open coffin in the crypt of St Afra. This delay, though, made it possible for a painter – traditionally believed to have been Moretto – to make a portrait of Angela lying there in the sleep of death. This painting on wood was used to seal the niche in which the bier had been placed. It appears to be lost today. During the ordinary process of beatification, it was carefully examined by two experts, the painter Francesco Monti, who attributed it to Moretto, and the painter Francesco Savanni, who recognised in it Romanino's hand.

We are giving Savanni's report on it, in case it might help in the recovery of this painting: "The board which is sealing the tomb of Blessed Angela Merici and which I am now examining, I believe to have been painted by Girolamo Romanino, our own Brescian painter, who was a pupil of Titian and was working from 1537. It seems to me that I see his style of painting here, particularly in the face and in the hands, by the design and the colouring, and also by his habit of lengthening the sleeves so that they cover a good part of the hands, as can be seen in the picture in question.

"The latter certainly goes back to the period under discussion, in other words it is two hundred years old and perhaps even a little more, because it is painted on wood coated with plaster, a technique employed especially by Titian, Moretto, Romanino, Calisto da Lodi and Zambellini, but which was discontinued later. Another sign of its antiquity is that the colours have become dark and the paint has flaked off in more than one place.

"Blessed Angela Merici is shown here as a dead person lying on her back, and I know it is she from having seen some printed pictures of her which are circulating here and there, and there is a perfect likeness between these and the one in the painting, both in the physiognomy and in the habit, which is what the religious of the Third Order of St Francis used to wear, namely the veil and the religious wimple which the Terti-

<sup>60</sup> ASC, Provisioni, n.534, ff.92r-93r.

aries today, at least in Brescia, no longer wear, and the long grey-beige cape which completely covers her, apart from the hands and the feet which remain uncovered.

"It seems to me, too, that two small additions were made later to this painting and they are visible. This appears clear to me principally from the fact that they have not been done on the plaster but simply painted in a colour which harmonizes with the rest of the picture and is obviously more recent".<sup>61</sup>

Faino thought the painting was the work of Moretto. Lombardi reports: "In the *Vita* manuscript which he sent to the Elector Ferdinand Maria of Bavaria in 1671, and in a letter which he wrote to the Noble Lady Cecilia Sagredo in Venice (the original of which is kept by the Ursulines of Venice), Bernardino Faino says that the Bl. Angela in that picture was 'a true to life painting by Alessandro Moretto, a well-known Brescian painter of that period who had been a pupil of Raphael of Urbino, and who painted so realistically with his brush, that one could not tell the difference between the original and the copy". 62

The choice remains between Moretto and Romanino.

There is also a description in the Catalogue of Antonio Morassi: 63

<sup>61</sup> APC. Vat. 340, ff.687v-688r. "La tavola che serve a chiudere il deposito della Beata Angela Merici, che attualmente sto considerando, io la giudico dipinta da Girolamo Romanino nostro bresciano, il qual fu scolaro di Tiziano, e operava sino dell'anno 1537, perché mi par di vedervi il di lui carattere di dipingere, particolarmente nella faccia e nelle mani, per li contorni, per il colorire, e per un certo suo costume di allungare le maniche, cosiché coprissero buona parte delle mani, come si vede nella presente figura.

"Certamente essa è del tempo sudetto, cioè antica di duecento e forse più anni, perché è dipinta sul legno ingessato, come praticarono di fare specialmente Tiziano, Moretto, Romanino, Calisto da Lodi e Zambellini, e di poi si è communemente dismesso; e mi dà indizio di buona antichità anche

l'esser divenuti neri i colori, e l'essersi la pittura in più d'un luogo scrostata.

"Essa rappresenta la Beata Angela Merici distesa supina e nello stato di morta, e ciò lo so per aver veduti alcuni ritratti a stampa della detta Beata che vanno attorno, a i quali rassomiglia perfettamente questa figura della tavola nella fisonomia quanto nell'abito, che è di religiosa del Terzo Ordine di San Francesco all'uso antico, cioè con velo e bavero da monaca, che le Terziarie moderne, almeno qui in Brescia, non costumano più, e con un lungo mantello di color bigio che tutta la cuopre, a riserva delle mani e dei piedi, che restano scoperti.

"Sono anche di parere che alla detta tavola siano state fatte posteriormente due picciole giunte che si vedono; e ciò mi si rende chiaro principalmente dal non essere ingessate ma solamente tinte di un

colore che accompagna il rimanente della tavola, e che mostra d'esser più fresco".

<sup>62</sup> LOMBARDI, *Vita, op. cit.*, p.137: "Bernardino Faino nella Vita manoscritta da lui mandata all'Elettor Ferdinando Maria di Baviera nel 1671, e in una Lettera che scrisse alla Nobil Donna Cecilia Sagredo in Venezia (l'originale di questa lettera conservasi appresso le Orsoline di Venezia), dice che la B. Angela era in quella tavola tutto 'al naturale dipinta da Alessandro Moretto bresciano, celebre pittore di que' tempi, allievo di Rafaello d'Urbino, che col pennello imitava si bene la natura, che dalla copia all'originale non si scorgeva divario'".

<sup>63</sup> Ministero della Educazione Nazionale, Direzione Generale delle Antichità e Belle Arti. Catalogo delle cose d'arte e di antichità d'Italia, Brescia, a cura di ANTONIO MORASSI, La Libreria dello Stato,

"Board which is believed to have been the original cover of the coffin. The Saint is represented on her death-bed, her face almost in profile; the head, enveloped in a veil and crowned with a garland of laurel, is resting on two high pillows. The body, on its back, dressed in a dark robe, is stretched out on a bed (but only half of the body). It is the oldest portrait of Angela Merici ... Painted in oil on wood, measuring 0.46 x 1.50m .... This painting is certainly closer to Moretto's style, from which it is derived, than to Romanino's".

At this point we are faced with a problem: Is the painting examined by Morassi the same as the one described earlier, and, if so, when and why had the board been made shorter?

There is another painting which seems to owe its origin to the accidental delay in the burial. It is unanimously agreed that it is the work of a painter of distinction. Angela Merici is shown here half-length, in the peaceful sleep of death. Her face bears the impression of an aura of deep spirituality, as if the painter had wanted to capture for ever on the canvas the interior gaze of the contemplative.

At the time of the Processes, this painting was kept in the oratory of the Company of St Ursula, which was adjacent to the church dedicated to the same Saint.

In his judgment on the painting as an art-expert, Francesco Monti said: "If it is not by Moretto, as I would think, then it is certainly the work of an artist of distinction of that time", and Francesco Savanni endorsed this opinion. A description of this painting is given in D36,b.

Four epitaphs were originally attached to the sarcophagus. Two were the work of a certain Don Valeriano from Bergamo, a Canon Regular of the Lateran, and another was by a law-expert called Zanetti. Would he perhaps be the notary Girolamo Zanetti who, in 1538, had drawn up the deed by which Lucrezia Lodrone settled a legacy in favour of the Company? <sup>64</sup> The last epitaph was by Gabriele Cozzano, professor of letters. Nazari has given an account of these four epitaphs at the end of his *Vita*. <sup>65</sup>

65 D17.

Roma, 1939, XVII, p.22: "Tavola che si ritiene essere stata l'antico coperchio della cassa funebre. La Santa è rappresentata sul letto di morte; il viso si presenta quasi di profilo; il capo, avvolto in un velo e con una ghirlanda d'alloro, posa su due alti guanciali. Il corpo, supino, vestito di una veste scura, è steso su un letto (fino a metà corpo soltanto). È la più antica rappresentazione della Merici... Dipinto ad olio su tavola: misura m 0,46 x 1,50... La tavola è certamente più affine all'arte del Moretto, da cui deriva, che non a quella del Romanino".

<sup>64</sup> APC. Vat. 341, f.924; and supra, Pt.II, Ch.III, d.

- By the Reverend Valeriano from Bergamo, Canon Regular:
   "Martyr by your own will, virgin in deed and teacher by word,
   Thus, O Blessed Angela, you rejoice, rich with your triple crown.
   You taught once, Angela, how to live a virtuous life;
   Come now to protect and to defend your country".
- By the same:
  "In life, I was called Angela; in death I am called an 'angel'.
  And, indeed, it is as an angel that I am joined to the angelic choir.
  You who knew me, live following my example.
  Do as I taught you; in death, I am teaching you still".
- By a certain Zanetti, doctor of law:
  "Buried in this tomb is one who
  By name, and even more by her whole life,
  Was worthy to be compared with the heavenly choirs.
  In three places Angela is to be found:
  Her body in the tomb, her spirit in heaven,
  And her name on the lips of men".
- By Gabriele Cozzano, professor of letters:
  "Here lies Angela, wearing a crown of many virtues
  While waiting for the final resurrection.
  Her ardent spirit has entered the heavenly dwelling-place
  And, innocent, stands before the Most High God.
  This is the virgin who, in her lifetime, by a rule of life
  Established a company illustrious for its virginity.
  Heed me, O Brescia, venerate this sacred tomb,
  For she can do all things, this holy virgin close to God".

It was Don Gianfrancesco de' Saramonti, Canon of St Afra, who undertook the task of seeing that a worthy tomb was prepared. Nazari described it, even adding a sketch in his "Libro della Vita" which is lost. We are giving the description 66 as it was written down in the Atti del Processo.

Later on, in the 1580's, when the Canons of the Lateran were restoring the church of St Afra, they asked the Company of St Ursula for a contribution towards a more dignified resting-place for their Foundress. It seems that, some time earlier, 80 lire planete had already been collected with this purpose in mind, but then, on account of the plague, nothing had been done. At the Council meeting of 21 December 1588,

"it was decided that the Company would pay the eighty lire which had been received as alms, as already mentioned, and then it would add the difference to make up the required one hundred lire, and this sum had to be handed over to the said Reverend Fathers, on condition that the money was spent on the aforementioned tomb".<sup>67</sup>

The tomb of Angela was subsequently moved. Today the Saint lies in a glass case in the church which used to be called St Afra and is now

the shrine of St Angela Merici.

More than two centuries after her death, during the Process of canonisation, the mortal remains of Angela were once again the cause for dispute, but this time over how these remains should be dressed, after

the recognition of the body as was required by procedure.

On 19 December 1772, the postulatrix of the cause, Mother Maria Luisa di S. Giuseppe Schiantarelli, Ursuline of the "venerable monastery" of Rome, put the request to Cardinal Giovanni Molino, bishop of Brescia and Relator of the cause of canonisation, that the remains of Bl. Angela should be reclothed in black, such as the Ursulines of all branches were wearing, since "every founder always dresses in the colour worn by his sons, even if in his lifetime he had dressed differently. It follows that, despite the fact that Blessed Angela was dressed in grey-beige when she was alive, and that she had been dressed in the same way after her death, it seems much more to the point today to dress her in the uniform colour worn by all Ursulines, just as we see so very, very many holy founders with a habit similar to that worn by their followers, even though they certainly had not worn it when they were alive. Moreover, innumerable printed pictures of her effigy, and paintings in the public churches of the monasteries, colleges and houses of our Institute, all show her dressed in black, and these go back a considerable number of years and even, for a few, as far as the last century, so that the pictures are very old ...".68

<sup>67</sup> Secondo Libro Generale (subsequently indicated by the letters SLG), f.171r: "fu concluso che siano pagate per la detta Compagnia le sudette lire ottanta quale furono ellemosinate ut supra, et appresso che si supplisca tanto che siano in tutto lire cento, quali debbano esser consignati alli detti Rdi Padri,

con obligo di spenderli nel deposito antedetto".

<sup>68</sup> M. Luisa Schiantarelli, lettera 19-XII-1772, AV, Cause Beatificazione 432/1: "ogni fondatore si veste sempre del colore de' suoi figli, ancorché egli sia stato diversamente vestito in vita. Da ciò ne siegue che, benché sia vero che la Beata ancor viva vestisse di color bigio, e che dello stesso sia stata vestita dopo la sua morte, tutta volta in oggi sembra molto conveniente che si vesta di color uniforme a tutte le Orsoline, appunto come vediamo tanti e tanti santi fondatori dell'abito simile a quello di lor seguaci, benché sia certo non averlo essi in vita costumato. Di più, innumerabili stampe della sua effigie, e quadri nelle publiche chiese de' monasteri, collegi e case del nostro Istituto la rappresentano vestita di nero, e ciò da moltissimi anni, e qualcheduno sin dal secolo passato, siché sono quadri antichi..."

Mother Luisa made the most of an "Instruction" addressed to the ordinary of Brescia by the late Mgr Carlo Alessio Pisani, then Promoter of the Faith, who in anticipation of the recognition of the body and of the tomb in St Afra, had dictated the procedure to be followed for the cleaning of the remains and for clothing them afresh. The Instruction suggested preparing the new clothes "quae sericae sint, et quoad formam illis respondeant quibus in antiquis tabulis Beata Angela ornata conspicitur, nigri coloris scilicet cum manicis laxis, prout adhibent Religiosae

Ordinis Sancti Augustini".69

But the Franciscans, in the meantime, had made their position clear through the person of Fra Luigi Maria from Rome, postulator-general of the Franciscan Minors of the Observance. Neither Carlo Doneda nor the other judges were in favour of Mother Luisa's plan. This can be gathered from her letter to Cardinal Molino, transmitted through Cardinal Calino: "I have no doubt of your favours towards me, because His Eminence Calino has indicated to me his commitment, which is no less than yours, to persuading Signor Doneda and the others with him to dress our Blessed in black. In support of their cause, they have slyly brought on to the battlefield the Franciscan Order which, without letting me know, has had printed an incoherent Memoir, with the aim of proving that which, for my part, I do not contest, as Your Eminence will be able to see from the two memoirs, theirs and mine". 69 bis And she picks up again her argument in favour of the black habit worn by all the Ursulines.

The "Memoir" mentioned 70 gathers together all the evidence about Angela's belonging to the Franciscan Third Order and supports the his-

toricity of the grey-beige habit.

The question was settled by the Decree of the Sacred Congregation dated 27 March 1773. The testimonies collected at Brescia said: "dictam Beatam Angelam Tertiariam fuisse dicti Ordinis Minorum de Observantia Sancti Francisci, dicti Ordinis habitum induisse semper, eodem depictam reperiri in antiquis et authenticis tabulis, et indutum adhuc reperiri

69 APC, Vat. 341, f.997r-v.

70 Alla Sagra Congregazione de' Riti L'Emo e Rmo Sig. Card. Calini Ponente Brixien. Canonizationis B. Angelae Merici Tertiariae professae Ordinis Minorum de Observantia S. Francisci Fundatricis Societatis S. Ursulae. Per Fra Luigi Maria da Roma... dell'Ordine de' Minori Osservanti di S. Francesco, in

Roma 1772, Typis Bernabo, AV, Cause Beatificazione 432/1.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Non dubbito delle di lei grazie a mio favore, avendomi significato l'Emo Calino, l'impegno non men suo, che di Vostra Eminenza per indurre il sig. Doneda e gli altri con esso a vestire la nostra Beata di nero. A sostenere il loro impegno hanno fatto uscire alla sordina in campo la Religione Francescana, quale senza farmi parola à date alle stampe un incoerente Memoriale, che prende a provare ciò che per parte mia non si contrasta, come l'Eminenza Vostra rilevarà dalli due memoriali, loro e mio...".

Sacrum Corpus...". And so the Sacred Congregation "censuit rescribendum: quod Corpus Beatae Angelae novis cooperiatur vestibus sericis, quae quoad formam et colorem illis respondeant, quibus in antiquis tabulis induta conspicitur; si Sanctissimo Domino nostro placuerit". On April 3 1773, "Sanctitas Sua benigne annuit".

The ritual to be followed had been dictated by Mgr Pisani in his "Instruction": "Eaedem vestes benedicendae erunt, deinde ope monialium, seu piarum ac nobilium mulierum corpori aptandae. Dum autem haec fiunt, secreto tamen clausisque ecclesiae januis, poterunt aliquae candelae accendi ante sacras exuvias, et ab ecclesiasticis personis quae ibi

aderunt, psalmi et antiphonae de communi Virginum cani...".72

On 30 August 1774, four virgins of the Company of St Ursula at Brescia reclothed Blessed Angela in the grey-beige tunic and cape, with a white linen wimple and a white veil. While this was going on, "ab ecclesiasticis psalmi et hymni de Communi Virginum canebantur, aliis intortitia accensa gestantibus".<sup>73</sup> The Brescian clergy thus rendered homage to the humble foundress of the Company of St Ursula.

<sup>71</sup> APC, Vat. 341, f.998r-v.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., f.997v.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., f.1015r. Cf. infra, Pt.III, Ch.IV, 3.a.

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## Chapter VII

### THE FOUNDATION OF THE COMPANY

Certain biographical items of information, such as pilgrimages, penances, supernatural experiences, interpersonal relationships inspired by a deep spirituality, recur over and over again in Merician historiography and have become almost emblematic of Angela's life on earth. But there are others which are only referred to in passing, such as happens sometimes with events which are actually taking place before people's eyes and therefore seem more or less obvious. And so it is with the events leading to the institution of the Company of St Ursula; there exists no clear account to enable one to go through its various stages or to reconstruct its underlying reasons and circumstances. All we have are a few scattered references in the documents of the period, and these have to be rescued with patience and then put together again according to their logic, so as to bring out at least the main outline of the plan involved.

If we do this, we are able to discover how personal intuition and vocational mission required a long process of maturation, and how the divine plan was finally realised in an institution which had the stamp of originality and at the same time, from the very beginning, the framework of a strong and vigorous structure.

We will present, as complementary information, the results of our research in the historico-hagiographical and iconographical fields; while, on the other hand, a careful indexing of the *Secondo Libro Generale* and of notarial acts hitherto unknown has helped us to throw light on the very first virgins, pointed out by Cozzano and Faino.

#### 1. THE WAIT

There is no document which gives us explicit information about when the personal intuition and the vocational mission became a conscious design and began to take shape as a project. Angela does not seem to have said anything about it, and her direct witnesses saw no need to

say anything.

The inferior condition of most women in the 16th century is well known. They generally had to submit to the wishes of their parents or tutors; the prevailing mentality looked on them as being subject to men and as needing constant protection, and this limited their freedom of choice. And yet at that epoch it was not unknown for women to play a leading role in various walks of life, but to do so they had had to defy prejudices, and their commitment often struck a provocative note. Even more serious, it could be quite costly, unless a woman was favoured by particular circumstances and was able to make use of her privileges. The majority of women, however, were directed towards the married state or to the monastic life.

Owing to frequent forays of armed men and to violent situations breaking out easily on the one side, and to the old custom of the law of primogeniture on the other, but for very different reasons, parents were pushed by understandable apprehensions into "arranging" for their daughters to be placed under the physical and juridical protection of a husband or behind the grille of a monastery. At the same time, wars and misery led to an increase in prostitution.

If the woman belonged to the lower middle-class, it was certainly easier to marry her off, whether she wanted to marry or not, whether she wanted that particular husband or not, whereas the monasteries, not having any remunerative activity, used to ask from aspirants a dowry which would assure their livelihood or, at least, the benefit of protection by prestigious and influential families.

Thus, between the marriage frequently reduced to a form of barter, and the often forced taking of the veil, women saw their inescapable subordinate position being endorsed, their own legitimate aspirations frus-

trated and their own right of free choice suffocated.

Angela was a powerless witness of this precarious state of women; she could not remain insensitive to the painful evidence of secret inner torments, of regrets, of stifled rebellions, the confidence of which she received in her meetings with them. Then there was the prophecy she had heard at the Brudazzo, announcing that she was being entrusted with the mission of establishing a spiritual family of virgins; and she must have stored this up in her heart, while waiting to see what it meant. Perhaps the meaning had gradually become clearer to her precisely in the course of these meetings with young girls and women who were longing to consecrate themselves totally to Christ, but found themselves forced by circumstances into a marriage which they did not want. The lack of dowry, of health or of attraction to the cloister, or certain obstacles

which made it impossible to leave the family roof, at times used to keep some of them back in the world, and the prevailing custom then exposed them to an unwelcome marriage. Defenceless against public opinion, the only thing they could do was to conform, carrying a life-long regret in their heart.

The solution which presented itself to Angela's mind was unheardof at that time. It was a question of finding an alternative to the religious life, an alternative which would keep the intrinsic meaning of the total and definitive consecration of the religious life, even outside the monastery, and yet which would provide a guarantee of protection and of security for the woman and for her choice, defending her against possible opposition on the part of her family.

It was a solution challenging both tradition and custom and, at the beginning, it would not find any juridical support, because it constituted a break with a system rooted in the past, hallowed by egoisms and by

almost insurmountable prejudices.

One can understand why Angela, in spite of the divine message she had received, hesitated, prevaricated and put off the realisation of her project until almost the end of her life. Ottavio Gondi relates that a new intervention from heaven was necessary to help her to make up her mind: "One night she was castigated by an angel and severely reprimanded by Christ because she was taking a long time over starting this holy Company". Would this perhaps have been something he had picked up from the Luzzago family?

Cozzano is not so explicit, but he lets it be understood that something must have happened to make her come to a decision, certainly a supernatural experience, even if we do not know how it happened: "First of all, God himself inspired and at the same time compelled our foundress Mother to plant and to establish in his name this holy rule of life. So very true is this, that she did not call it her Company, but Jesus Christ's, and she did all she could for it, not as a mistress but as a servant. And although she had been inspired with the idea of it when she was a child and shown it from on high, and although she had a great longing for it, she had never wanted to start it, however, until commanded by Jesus Christ to do so, until he had cried out within her heart and had impelled and constrained her to begin and to establish it ...".

In his writings, Cozzano makes certain remarks which help to give

GONDI, Vita, op. cit., p.51. "Una notte fu flagellata dall'Angelo, e aspramente ripresa da Christo, perché induggiava a dare principio a questa benedetta Compagnia".
 D22, [f.963r].

us some idea of what it was that could have made Angela hesitant about founding the Company. Suffice it to recall the accusations hurled against the Foundress after her death, when her removal made it easy for public opinion to pass comments: "She certainly deserves to be reviled, this Sister Angela, who urged so many virgins to promise virginity, without giving due thought to the fact that she was leaving them in the midst of the perils of the world where they could not help falling into danger, or getting married, or taking some other path". So many were they that the families at a certain social level "do not desire or want their daughters to enter there".

The main reason for the accusations was, therefore, the fact that she had left "virgins in the midst of the world, something which no pa-

triarch had dared to do".5

There was a second reason: the Company did not correspond to any of the states of life generally accepted at that time. The "new life" proposed by Angela stepped outside the traditional framework, with the result that its Foundress was accused of pride: "She has attempted ... a work which many saints never attempted to do". People even expressed doubt about the eternal salvation of the Foundress, accusing her of be-

ing presumptuous.

Immediately after Angela's death – as we will see later – reactions and objections brought about the first reform of the Company. Angela had probably foreseen the consequences of her courageous action and the difficulties that her institution would have to face, on account of its somewhat revolutionary implication and also of the kind of emancipation of women it indirectly championed and involved. At the same time, she must have pondered over the risks which her daughters were likely to run, starting with the one of not being able to receive the dowry or inheritance which would have been theirs if they had married or had made solemn profession in a monastery. Eventually, however, she had had to bow to God's plan. Cozzano, her secretary and Chancellor of the Company, would write: "She alone, under divine inspiration, was the foundress of such a great work. She is the real and living mother, who has generated and regenerated them in the Word of truth and in the Blood of Jesus Christ".8

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> D23, ff.14v-15r.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Ibid. f.15r.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. f.24v.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Ibid. f.19r.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> D24, [f.974r]

Cozzano, however, does not exhaust the reasons which made Angela decide to institute the Company of St Ursula. Francesco Landini, on the other hand, summarises them succinctly: "It seems that divine Providence has raised up this honoured vocation to help and to exalt many young virgins, both rich and poor, who, although they have great respect for the religious life, nevertheless feel in no way inclined to shut themselves away with so much strictness in the cloister, or to bind themselves by vows, or who are too poor to enter the cloister or do not want to for other good reasons. Nevertheless, they desire to follow the Lamb wheresoever he goes, to sing the new canticle, and to be crowned, they also, with the shining diadem of the halo".9

This statement of Landini remains the clearest document we have about the origins of the Company and of its purpose. Doneda draws inspiration from it and confirms it: "As to Angela's purpose, or rather, that of God himself in setting up, through her, a new Society, this is what her historians say, what she herself made clear, (48) and what I am setting out briefly. Seeing that many young girls, called by God to the state of perpetual chastity, could not enter a monastery for lack of dowry or of health, or because they did not have the courage to submit themselves to the life of the cloister, she was inspired to found a congregation of secular virgins, living in their own homes after the fashion of the virgins of the first centuries, exempt from monastic observances, but in no way lacking any or almost any of the spiritual and corporal helps enjoyed by the cloistered virgins". 10 Note 48 reproduces in part Landini's text, to which Doneda adds: "In an ancient manuscript copy of the Rule one can read this preamble: Since in the Christian life and law the state of virgins and widows is praised as being more suitable than the state of marriage for attending to the things of God, and since not everyone is called to a monastery, we have instituted a little rule for those who would like to serve God in virginity or widowhood.".11

<sup>9</sup> LANDINI, Estratto, op. cit., D15.

DONEDA, Vita, op. cit., p.72: "Qual fine avesse la B. Angela, o per meglio dire, Iddio stesso nell'instituire per mezzo di lei una nuova Società, lo dicono li suoi istorici, anzi ella stessa lo palesò (48), ed io brevemente l'espongo. Vedendo che molte giovani chiamate da Dio allo stato di perpetua castità, non potevano entrare nei monasteri per difetto di dote o di sanità, o non avevano il coraggio di sottomettersi alla clausura, fu inspirata di fondare una congregazione de vergini secolari abitanti nelle proprie case, su la norma delle vergine dei primi secoli, esenti dalle obbligazioni dei monasteri, alle quali, non ostante, niuno o quasi niuno mancasse di quegli aiuti spirituali e corporali di cui godono le vergini claustrali".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p.148: "In un esemplare antico manoscritto della Regola si legge questo Proemio: Essendo nella vita et regula christiana laudato il stato delle vergini et vidue come più atto ad attendere alle cose di Dio, che non è il matrimonio, et non essendo chiamato ogni uno a monasterii, havemo instituito una regoletta per quelle che nella virginità o viduità vorranno servire a Dio".

The text of Landini and the one that Doneda extracted from the "ancient manuscript copy of the Rule", together with Cozzano's writings, are the only documents at present which throw light on Angela's project, born from the need to find some way out of the unresolved, concrete situation of her day.

This would not be, though, a compromise or makeshift solution, but a precise form of consecrated life, a form alternative to the cloistered life, with the same ends of personal sanctification and of glorification of God; it would employ the same means, namely, prayer, penance, the practice of the evangelical counsels; it would differ only in having a secular character.

The spirituality which Angela would give to the Company would include the same demands and suggestions as those which characterised the contemplative religious life; the austere disciplinary rules, spelt out in detail, would aim at safeguarding not only the chastity of its members understood as an end in itself, but also their total virginity, envisaged as a nuptial gift offered and consecrated to God. For this reason, even while continuing to live in the world, Angela's daughters would qualify as no longer belonging to the world.

The structures established for mutual support, and the precepts for reciprocal aid in certain instances, were aimed at instilling a sense of belonging in those young people who seemed to be on the periphery of a canonical state of life; they also enabled them to give an exterior witness of belonging to a specific group, the Company of St Ursula, which was much more demanding than the confraternities and the Third Orders then in existence.

Whatever the reasons which induced Angela to choose St Ursula as patroness of the newborn institute, the Foundress said nothing at all on the subject. We can try and discover them, however, by reflecting on the cult and tradition of St Ursula at that time.

#### 2. THE "PATRONESS" SAINT URSULA

Faino tried to explain the motives for the choice of St Ursula as patroness of the Company by resorting to flimsy arguments. Those put forward by Doneda are more reliable: "The virgin and martyr St Ur-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> FAINO, Vita, op. cit., pp.49-50; DONEDA, Vita, op. cit., pp.76-77. "La vergine e martire S. Orsola, come leggesi nella sua storia, fu capo e condottiera intrepida di migliaia di vergini, le quali, incoraggite dall'esempio e dalle esortazioni di lei, resisterono valorosamente agli assalti di un impuro idolatra esercito, e, con lo spargimento del proprio sangue per amore di Cristo, gloriosamente trionfa-

sula, as one reads in her story, was the leader and intrepid commander of thousands of virgins who, encouraged by her example and exhortations, valiantly resisted the assaults of an impure and idolatrous army and who, by shedding their blood for the love of Christ, gloriously triumphed over flesh and hell. And so it was to the protection of this great heroine of virginity and faith that Blessed Angela entrusted her Company, so that her dear daughters, living in the midst of the world, would be able to fight generously in defence of their virginal purity and innocence, by recalling to mind the illustrious captain under whose name they have the honour of fighting".

We searched ourselves for the source from which Angela might have derived the inspiration to give the title of St Ursula to her Company, notwithstanding her own devotion and admiration for St Catherine of Alexandria. Not only did we arrive at conclusions similar to those of Doneda, but we found in addition some similarities of expression, both literary and figurative, between the better known and more widespread "passio" of St Ursula and the Merician intuitions. The question arises, therefore, as to whether Angela knew about this "pas-

sio", or at least had heard the story of it.

Noting little or no distinction between history and legend, the Renaissance made St Ursula one of the most popular and most frequently represented saints in the figurative arts, on account of the endless retinue of virgins which had followed her to martyrdom after one of the most romantic and most romanticised adventures. But our modern age, with its rejection of legend, runs the risk of rejecting also the historical foundation from which the legend had originated.

## a) History and cult

The historical testimonies of St Ursula's martyrdom are lost in the mists of time, and the numerous legends which have accumulated, one on top of the other, have induced historians to cast doubt not only on her name and on the biographical facts concerning her (which cannot be verified anyway), but even on her very existence, in spite of the basilica dedicated to her at Cologne.

The bombing-raids suffered by the edifice during the Second World War allowed archeologists to excavate at depth beneath the foundations

rono della carne e dell'inferno. Alla protezione adunque di così grande eroina della verginità e della fede, consegnò anche la B. Angela la sua Compagnia, affinché le sue figliuole, vivendo in mezzo al secolo, combattessero generosamente a difesa della verginal purità e innocenza, rammentandosi della illustre capitana, sotto il cui nome hanno l'onore di militare".

of the apse. These excavations brought to light first of all the remains of a Romanesque wall and some alteration works dating probably from the 10th century. Underneath these were discovered the foundations of the so-called basilica of Clematius and, finally, the traces of a building clearly prior to 350, namely the ruins of a primitive church constructed on an ancient Roman cemetery.

Here as elsewhere, in fact, the Christians, taking advantage of the law which prohibited the "violatio sepulchri", had buried their martyrs in a public cemetery on which, as soon as it became possible, they had set up a place of devotion. In 355, when the Franks destroyed the city, the church dedicated to the virgin martyrs suffered the same fate.

Later Clematius, a man of renown of Eastern origin, had reconstructed this basilica from its foundations at his own expense, in fulfilment of a vow, as is proved by an inscription engraved on a stone tablet which was embedded in one of the walls of the church at a later date.<sup>13</sup> The characters of the inscription are of the purest and severest ancient style, down to the smallest detail, and the same observation can be applied to some of the peculiar spellings.<sup>14</sup> Taken as a whole, this epigraph, which recalls the martyrdom of some virgins, can be dated back to the period 350-450. At that time the fame of St Ursula and her companions had not yet spread, her legend had not yet developed, and so Clematius had had to take quite a recent tradition as his basis, one which went back to events which had actually happened and which could still be remembered.

It was among the ruins of this construction which came after the primitive one that a reliquary-tomb of the 10th century was discovered, with eleven "loculi" which must have served to house human remains after their exhumation. This proved the intrinsic authenticity of the historical testimony contained in Clematius' epigraph: "ubi sanctae virgines pro nomine Christi sanguinem suum fuderunt".<sup>15</sup>

The epigraph, in its turn, exonerated Attila and his Huns, who later would be held responsible for the massacre of the virgins of Cologne. At

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> CABROL-LECLERCQ, Dictionnaire d'Archéologie chrétienne et de Liturgie, t.III, Paris 1914, cc.2171-2172.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Ibid., c.2173.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, cc.2171-2172. The complete text of the epigraph is as follows: "DIVINIS FLAMMEIS VI-SIONIB. FREQUENTER ADMONIT. ET VIRTVTIS MAGNAE MAIIESTATIS MARTYRII CAELESTIVM VIRGIN. IMMINENTIVM EX PARTIB. ORIENTIS EXSIBITVS PRO VOTO CLEMATIVS V.C. DE PROPRIO IN LOCO SVO HANC BASILICAM VOTO QVOD DEBEBAT A FVNDAMENTIS RESTITVIT SI QVIS AV[T]EM SVPER TANTAM MAIIESTATEM HVIIVS BASILICAE VBI SANCTAE VIRGINES PRO NOMINE XPI SANGVINEM SVVM FVDERVNT CORPVS ALICVIIVS DEPOSVERIT EXCEPTIS VIRGINIB. SCIAT SE SEMPITERNIS TARTARI IGNIB. PVNIENDVM".

the time Attila was sacking the cities in Gaul before meeting with his defeat on the Catalaunian Plain in 451, the second basilica in honour of the virgin martyrs was already in existence.

Martyrs without a name and without a history. Eleven of them. But the barbarian invasions which followed one upon the other over a long period wiped out this little nucleus of historical truth to which the "loculi" were able to bear witness.

Wandelbert of Prüm, in his martyrology in verse which appeared in 848,<sup>16</sup> was the first to make allusion to thousands of martyrs, whom he eulogises in four verses. The number of verses, exceptional in his whole work, is indicative of the great interest he attached to them:

"Tunc numerosa simul Rheni per litora fulgent Christo virgineis erecta trophea maniplis Agrippinae urbi, quarum furor impius olim Millia mactavit ductricibus inclita sanctis".<sup>17</sup>

21 October was the day fixed for the commemoration of the martyrs. The church, the monastery <sup>18</sup> and the chapter, established already since the 9th century, were called "Sanctarum Virginum", "ad sanctas Virgines"...

From this same 9th century onwards, martyrologies, calendars, litanies all bear witness to the existence at Cologne of a very special cult, sometimes directed towards anonymous virgins, sometimes towards eleven virgins whose number would increase, with a complete disregard for any numerical limit, at times even reaching eleven thousand.

A Sermo in natali Sanctarum Virginum XI Millium, <sup>19</sup> preached by an anonymous panegyrist of the 10th century, gives a hint that these martyrs by then had fallen into a certain oblivion, since the author hopes that a writer will finally take up the pen to tell the story of the Eleven Thousand Virgins. Already some of them had been given names, names of Roman origin which were frequent in the 4th and 5th centuries: Martha, Saula, Brictola or Britula, Gregoria, Saturnina, Sabatia or Rabacia, Pinnosa or Vinnosa, Ursola or Ursula, Sentia, Palladia, Saturia. <sup>20</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Analecta Bollandiana, t.LXXIX, p.273.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> WANDELBERT OF PRÜM, Martyrology, vv.671-674, ibid., and in *Acta Sanctorum*, Octobris, t.IX, 1869, p.145 and p.272.

 <sup>18 &</sup>quot;Parthenon S. Ursulae quando primum conditum fuerit, non satis liquet. In documentis historicis primum memoratur anno 992", in *Historia SS. Ursulae et Sociarum eius* hactenus editis antiquior ex codice Bruxellensi 831-34. Collato cum Cod. Brux. 8917. Cf. *Analecta Bollandiana*, III, 1884, p.8, note 1.
 19 Acta Sanctorum, Octobris, t.IX, 1869, cit., pp.154-157.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> GUY DE TERVARENT, La légende de Sainte Ursule dans la littérature et l'art du Moyen-Age, t.I, texte, Paris. Les éditions G. Van Oest, 1931, p.11. Most of this information and of that which follows comes from this work.

Thus, at the height of the Middle Ages, here are Roman Christian names instead of Frankish ones. Had they been suggested perhaps by the tomb-stones of the ancient cemetery? Or had they been invented, with a concern for historical coherence scarcely known at that time? Or had these names, in spite of everything, been handed down by oral tradition? Lacking the necessary data, we are unable to answer these questions in a critical way. We can only give the following conclusions: some virgins were certainly martyred at Cologne between the 3rd and 4th centuries; they immediately became the object of a cult; in spite of the barbarian invasions, their cult was kept alive; regarding their number, names and the circumstances of their martyrdom, nothing is to be found in documents of historical value.

The first formulary of a Mass in honour of the Martyrs of Cologne gives as the official title of the feast: "Sanctarum XI Virginum", 21 while Wandelbert speaks about thousands of saints.

Wilhelm Levison, in his Das Werden der Ursula-Legende<sup>22</sup> gives a plausible explanation: "In the manuscripts, the stroke placed above a letter signifies either that this letter can be taken as a number, or that this number itself is to be understood as so many thousands.  $\overline{XI}$ , which means eleven, would then have been read as 'eleven thousand'... We must not forget, though, that this hypothesis ... rests on a postulate, namely that there was the figure eleven at the beginning".

Gradually the Eleven Thousand became the accepted number.

According to the preacher of the Sermo in natali mentioned above, this group came from Britain under the leadership of Vinnosa (Pinnosa for the Germans). But when the bones were transferred to Essen, her place in popular devotion was taken by Ursula. This name, moreover, is found in the church of the martyrs, in an inscription on the tomb-stone of a little girl of eight years.<sup>23</sup> Homonymy or confusion? The fact remains that the feminine community devoted to the cult of the Eleven Thousand Virgins believed, and made others believe, that they possessed the tomb of St Ursula. It was probably to explain these holy relics

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> LEDÓCHOWSKA, Angela, op. cit., I, p.219.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> WILHELM LEVISON, Das Werden der Ursula-Legende, Köln 1928, quoted by GUY DE TERVARENT, La Légende, op. cit, t.I, p.12.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> The inscription, discovered in 1893, reads: In hoc tum) ulo innocis virgo iacet

no) mine Ursula vixit

a) nnibus octo

m) ensibus duobus

d) iens quattuor.

In CABROL-LECLERCQ, Dictionnaire, op. cit., cc.2164-2165.

that the oldest "passio", Fuit tempore pervetusto<sup>24</sup> was written. Its rather obscure Latin made its diffusion difficult; only a few rare manuscripts of it, in fact, are known. But there is a later one, Passio Sanctarum XI Millium Virginum "Regnante Domino",<sup>25</sup> which is easier to read and was more generally circulated, since many manuscripts of it are still extant.<sup>26</sup>

It is probably to this "passione" that the preachers used to refer, as well as the distributors of relics and the pilgrims who used to depart

from Germany for the Holy Land, passing through Venice.

The contents of this legend must have provided the material for the commemorative or occasional homilies, and suggested the elements of the devotion. Thus, Angela could have known about the terms of this "passio".

We are going to give a résumé of the chief passages, following the Latin text as closely as possible, precisely in order to bring out the similarities which we have noticed between certain expressions and the Merician language.

# b) The legend

In ancient Britain lived a king and queen who desired a son. God gave them instead a baby-girl, but with the heart of a man, and he suggested that they call her Ursula, because one day she would strangle the devil, as David had done once with the bear.<sup>26b</sup>

Raised according to her state, and yet detached from the riches of the world, Ursula longed for spiritual marriage and meditated day and night on the law of God (so far, rather a stereotyped profile). The divine Artist had already chosen her, and his voice was echoing in her ear: "Listen, my daughter, give ear, the king is taken with your beauty".

Her hand was sought in marriage by the son of a barbarian and pagan king, but reassured in a dream from heaven that she would receive the palm of martyrdom, Ursula promised to give herself in marriage on the following conditions: her father and fiancé were to choose ten young companions for her; for each one, including herself, they were to add another thousand; they would procure eleven ships and allow them three years "ad dedicationem virginitatis nostrae". With an indomitable faith, Ursula added: "incommutabile divinae pietatis consilium, quod Dominus disposuit super me, nemo est, qui possit infirmare".<sup>27</sup>

26 Cf. DE TERVARENT, La Légende, op. cit., p.1.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Historia SS. Ursulae et Sociarum eius, cit., pp.5-20.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Passio Sanctarum Undecim Millium Virginum "Regnante Domino", AA.SS, cit., pp.157-161.

<sup>26</sup>b Bear: "Ursus" in Latin.

<sup>27</sup> Passio cit., in AA.SS, cit., p.158.

Very soon the great virginal adventure began; the triremes welcomed this unusual legion of young girls, for the most part pagan; their leader was Ursula and the second in command Pinnosa, the daughter of an important general, "quasi magistra virginalis militiae". Surrounded by her army of virgins, the blessed Ursula, her face and heart radiant with joy, gave thanks to God, and then, as was the custom among brothersin-arms, she revealed her great secret to her companions. With pious exhortations, she began instructing them in the practice of the love of God; she encouraged them and rendered them audacious. They listened to her very intently, then raising their hands and hearts to heaven, as if they had already promised to be faithful to all their religious duties and to encourage each other to carry them out, "utpote quibus jam tunc cor unum et anima una erat, supernaque dulcedine praegustata, in mentibus earum mundus et gloria viluerat". 28

The transformation of these young pagan girls into Christians and their preparation for martyrdom took place on board ship, in a kind of idealised area, through an apprenticeship filled with "joie de vivre" and

the adventurous spirit of adolescence.

And this is how they celebrated "cum multa iucunditate", over a period of three years, the prelude to their martyrdom, praying together

to God for the preservation of their virginity.

A storm drove the ships from Britain towards the Rhine. The Captain of this adventure then poured forth her nuptial song to the heavenly spouse. "Quod cum puellaris exercitus non clamo[ro]so strepitu, sed pari cordis concentu resonaret, canticum hoc laetitiae usque ad aures Domini Sabaoth cum odore suavitatis pervenit".29 During the night, a heavenly messenger came to Ursula to announce a pilgrimage to Rome "cum dulcissimo hoc sororum tuarum contubernio", the return to Cologne, the martyrdom. When Ursula, "convocata virginum concione", told them about her dream, "communis esultatio facta est, immolatisque laudum hostiis, unanimi deliberatione statuerunt iter hoc festinantius peragere". 30 Thanks to a favourable wind, they continued sailing as far as Basle, and from there "pedestri itinere Romam pervenerunt. Ubi cum per dies aliquot, perlustratis ubique diversis sanctorum liminibus, pervigiles in oratione Deo animas suas commendarent... itinere, quo venerant, Basileam reversae sunt, ascensisque navibus, per decursum Rheni... tandem Coloniam applicuerunt".31 Åt Cologne, the Huns fell upon the virgins with

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p.159.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p.160.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

savage cries, and ruthlessly massacred this innocent flock.32

"O quale hac die in caelo factum est tripudium, qualis occursus supernorum civium? Quae exsultatio apostolorum? Quam communis gloria martyrum et sanctarum virginum de augmento ordinis sui gloriantium?" So ended the passio "Regnante Domino".

The renown of Ursula and and of her countless retinue spread very rapidly throughout medieval Europe from 1106 onwards. This was the year when the famous "ager ursulanus", in other words, the ancient Roman cemetery, was discovered. Faced with such a quantity of bones, the inhabitants of Cologne believed they had found the burial-ground of Ursula and her companions, and the legend of the Eleven Thousand Virgins received the official blessing of History.

On the steps of the legend also came swarms of relics. The relics were instrumental in helping to spread the legend, and in their turn they became the source of later legends, so that every skull ended by having its own name and history. Some epigraph provided the name; piety and

good faith added the history and the halo.

By her revelations about the holy army of virgins at Cologne, Elizabeth of Schönau,<sup>34</sup> born in 1123, would play a large part in filling in the gaps due to the lack of historical documents, and in explaining the presence of the bones of adults, even of men, in what had been an ancient cemetery. "Des problèmes puérils y trouvent des explications laborieuses, qui nous font sourire, mais visiblement contentaient la voyante et son entourage, comme elles devaient satisfaire les écrivains et les artistes jusqu'à la fin du moyen-âge".<sup>35</sup>

Elizabeth enjoyed an extraordinary success. Lovers of legends pounced on her simple biographies, people drew their devotions from

them and art was fashioned by them.

Towards the end of the 12th century, an anonymous author started on the work of completing Elizabeth's writings.<sup>36</sup> But his two books of Revelationes today seem to be a mixture of puerility, acrobatic devotion and parody.

Following in the tracks of these "Revelations", which were not completed, Crombach<sup>37</sup> made a census of the virgins who had made up

35 DE TERVARENT, La Légende, op. cit., I, p.26.

<sup>37</sup> CROMBACH H., S. Ursula Vindicata, Coloniae Agrippinae 1647; cf. AA.SS, cit., note b, p.201.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p.161.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> Liber Revelationum seu Imaginationum S. ELISABETHAE SCHOENAUGIENSIS de SS. Ursulae et sociabus. AA.SS, cit., pp.163-173.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> Revelationes seu Imaginationes B. HERMANNI JOSEPHI canonici regularis Sieinfeldensis, de XI Millibus Virginum, AA.SS, cit., pp.173-207.

Ursula's army and arrived at the number 9,816. The anonymous author had not hesitated to impose a name on all the bones in the cemetery or to

assign them a role.

In his Leggenda Aurea,<sup>38</sup> Jacopo da Voragine, as Elizabeth had already done, would bring Ursula's betrothed into the cortege of virgins, together with Pope Cyriacus (he never existed!) who had had to resign so that he could follow the virgins, and a whole suite of cardinals and bishops. Carpaccio's brush would take up the narrative cycle of the Golden Legend and would depict it in nine large canvas paintings commissioned by the "Scuola di S. Orsola" at San Zanipolo in Venice, that is by the Confraternity of St-Ursula established at the church of Sts John and Paul.

In spite of all the amplifications and the incongruities, all of them regrettable, in these legends, there is nothing to invite ridicule in the devotion to St Ursula and her companions when one thinks of the concrete reality of the martyrdom of some young Christian girls, which forms the basis of the legend.

## c) Angela - Saint Ursula

Among the "Lives of the Saints" which Giovanni Merici used to read to his family, and which Angela must have listened to with interest and then turned over in her mind as a child, it seems that the stories of Catherine of Alexandria and of Ursula were the ones which had impressed her most.

We have already referred to the first. A number of factors could have contributed towards arousing the devotion to the second, beginning with Ursula's great popularity, certainly equal to that of Catherine, but more spectacular and kept alive by frequent figurative representations. The complexity of the legendary adventures and the imposing choir of eleven thousand virgins offered material for a whole series of narrative compositions.

When she passed through Venice, Angela might have seen Carpaccio's paintings inspired by the *Golden Legend*, pictures which, against the elegant and sumptuous background of an enchanting Venice, tell a story closer to Renaissance literature than to medieval hagiography. Under her very eyes, Angela could have seen two Brescian paintings, the one by Antonio Vivarini in the church of S. Pietro in Oliveto,<sup>39</sup> and the

<sup>38</sup> Cf. supra, Pt.II, Ch.I, 2.d.

<sup>39</sup> At present in the Diocesan Seminary.

other by Moretto in the church of San Clemente, opposite the house of

Agostino Gallo.

Traditional iconography portrayed Ursula in the ermine and crown of royalty, with the arrow and the palm of martyrs, and the standard bearing the cross of a warrior; she could be seen, too, with the folds of her cloak sheltering her companions. These paintings, such as the frescoes of Tommaso of Modena in the church of S. Margherita at Treviso and those of Vigo di Pieve di Cadore, were expressions of a cult which was becoming very widespread, especially in the Venetian and Lombard regions, thanks to the passage of German pilgrims to Rome. Office and Mass proper to the Virgins of Cologne also found their place in the official liturgy of other countries.<sup>40</sup>

Already by the 14th century, the Confraternity or School of St Ursula had been established in Venice. This was a sodality founded on religious and humanitarian grounds, perhaps after the example of the German "Navicula Sanctae Ursulae", 41 which brought together people of every social class, including rulers, knights, ladies of rank, religious.

But it is probably elsewhere that we must search for the reasons for Angela's choice at that particular time when the legend had the blessings of history: the regal dignity of Ursula, her courage in facing the unknown in order to carry out God's plans, her pilgrimage to Rome, that thrill of joy which runs through the whole story of her adventures, the defence of her virginity to the point of martyrdom, and above all perhaps, her role as captain at the head of this army of eleven thousand virgins, all this must have struck a deep corresponding and echoing note in Angela's soul, and it would seem as if some of her spiritual attitudes were almost borrowed from the legend.

Thus the regality of Ursula evoked the dignity of the virgins of the Company, called to the royal wedding-feast with the "Son of God" and destined one day to become "glorious queens in heaven". And perhaps Angela was reminded of the pilgrim she once was by the young girl who defied the high seas with her numerous cortege or who faced the uncertainties of the long pilgrimage to Rome. Angela's audacity and her awareness of being entrusted with a mission from on high would converge together in the foundation of the Company, just as formerly a similar audacity and a similar awareness had led Ursula to gather round her thousands of virgins to make them spouses of Christ. A similar spir-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>40</sup> For example, in the Missale Passaviense, printed at Venice in 1522; cf. AA.SS, cit., pp.282-283.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.293-298. <sup>42</sup> Regola, Prologue.

itual maternity attracted Angela towards this captain of virgins. On their part, the eleven thousand virgins experienced a most exalted life together: "cor unum et anima una";<sup>43</sup> at the news of their imminent martyrdom "communis exsultatio facta est";<sup>44</sup> they made their decisions "unanimi deliberatione";<sup>45</sup> and their song resounded "pari coris concentu".<sup>46</sup> Here, it seems, was a prefiguration of that "unite insieme" to which Angela returned so often, urging the unity which she longed for with all her heart.

Even if its structure was secular, the Company gave the impression of being and really was an authentic community, made up of prayer,<sup>47</sup> of dialogue,<sup>48</sup> of service,<sup>49</sup> of mutual help,<sup>50</sup> of family spirit even in what had to be verified and evaluated,<sup>51</sup> a community guided by a unitary government.<sup>52</sup>

The joy and the enthusiasm often recalled in the legend also characterised Merician spirituality. It was against a background of heavenly joy that the eleven thousand virgins ended their earthly life: "O quale hac die in caelo factum est tripudium, qualis occursus supernorum civium? Quae exsultatio apostolorum? Quam communis gloria martyrum et sanctarum virginum de augmento ordinis sui gloriantium?"<sup>53</sup>

Angela would say in her 5th Counsel: "How much they should exult and rejoice, for a new crown of glory and joy is prepared in heaven, for each and every one of them!" and, in the Last Counsel, "You will have the protection of Our Lady, the Apostles, all the saints, the angels, and finally all heaven and all creation". And in the Prologue to the Rule: "... and so we may enter with glory into the heavenly kingdom. Then there will be cause for great glory and triumph, both in heaven and on earth".

Let us leave the conclusion to Gabriele Cozzano in his *Epistola*: "Now, supposing there was nothing else to influence it, should not a name as attractive and noble as that of the Company of St Ursula induce any heart as hard as iron to long for this life? And will we ever find a congregation more worthy than that of St Ursula? Large in number,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup> Passio "Regnante Domino", n.8, in AA.SS, cit., p.159.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p.160.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Regola, Ch.VI.

<sup>48</sup> Testamento, 7th Legacy, Ricordi, 4th Counsel; COZZANO, Dichiarazione, cit.

Regola, Prologue; Ricordi, 1st Counsel.
 Testamento, 8th Legacy; Regola, Ch.XII.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>51</sup> Testamento, 7th and 10th Legacies.

<sup>52</sup> Regola, Ch.XII.

<sup>53</sup> Passio "Regnante Domino", cit., in AA.SS, cit., p.161.

royal in dignity, triumphant in victories, powerful in merits and divine in honours. Such is our Company and such it will be, at least internally. And those who are faithful, who make every effort to do what the Foundress has commanded, will become just as glorious. And so believe, let every one of you believe - and she will believe the truth - that she [Angela] did not give this name to the Company by chance, nor to ennoble it by calling it this, as happens in the world when one chooses important names or those of great saints for a child, either to adorn that person or out of devotion, or again in the hope or the desire that this child will grow in virtue by imitating the saint whose name has been given to him, or for all these things together or for other similar reasons. I repeat, this Company has not been named for such frivolous reasons. But this name has come from heaven, introduced through the force and power of the Holy Spirit. In this name a new grace from the Most High is promised to everyone who perseveres faithfully in this obedience. Promised also is that virtue of sanctity which was given to those eleven thousand virgins who obeyed Ursula's will, or rather God's voice through her, that virtue through which they overcame themselves and conquered death".54

Are these Cozzano's personal reflections or are they the souvenir of conversations with the Foundress and of things she herself had confided to him?

At the threshold where history and legend intermingle in proclaiming a unique message, Doneda<sup>55</sup> and Lombardi<sup>56</sup> interpret Angela's choice as a homage to that army of intrepid virgins who had known how to fight to the point of death in the heroic defence of their virginity and as a witness to their faith, but they also see it as a programme of life. To this programme Angela would give the specific character of the virginal gift of self to God, involving the interior self-emptying of the mystic, the courageous fidelity of the martyr, the evangelisation of the world typical of the apostle and the participation in the work of salvation peculiar to Christ.

54 D22, [f.964r-v].

55 DONEDA, Vita, op.cit., p.77.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>56</sup> LOMBARDI, Vita, op. cit., pp.100-101.

#### 3. THE REALISATION

# a) The first virgins of the Company

Going back to the origins of the Company of St Ursula, Cozzano recalls those who had formed its base: "There were many virgins who were the first-fruits of the Holy Spirit in this fraternity ... The youngest were Simona, the daughters of Dolza Drusilla, Laura, Andriana, Peregrina and others. There were also the Peschere sisters, Lady Chiara Gaffurra. The eldest were Barbara, Chiara, Margarita, Maria. Among them was the oldest and the saintliest, the reverend Mother Angela". 57

Under Faino's pen, this simple recollection of names would become

a proper list, complete with Christian and family names.

Gabriele Cozzano had simply recalled the virgins, going back in his mind to the joyful and exhilarating times right at the beginning, when Angela shone "like a sun" among them. Faino, however, apparently wanted to give them a definite identity. And so, looking through the names written in a register (perhaps the Libro Primo della Compagnia which we will be speaking about later) he made up his own list, taking the Christian names which Cozzano had indicated, irrespective of the family name which accompanied them in the register. The first list drawn up by Faino in his manuscript was later modified in the printed edition. The author reveals the method he had used in two notes in the margin of the manuscript list:58 "It is believed that the names of the twelve virgins written opposite are probably those [but as we have already said, this is conjecture on Faino's part] whom the Blessed Angela took with her for the visit and pilgrimage to the Sacro Monte of Varallo in the year 1532, when she went there a second time". And again: "The surnames are not given in the aforesaid Libro [Cozzano's Dichiarazione della Bolla], but they have been taken from the first Register which starts from when Angela first erected the Company, and in which are written the Christian and family names of the members and the division into districts, so that it is known in which 'Colonelli' of the City the members of the Company are to be found".

Cozzano had given the names of thirteen virgins; Faino, sometimes

57 COZZANO, Dichiarazione. D24, [f.974r].

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>58</sup> FAINO, *Miscellanea*, f.167. Cf. also supra, Pt.II, Ch.V, 5. "Le contrascritte 12 Vergini si stima probabilmente che fossero quelle, che la B. Angela seco condusse alla visita et pellegrinaggio del Sacro Monte di Varallo nell'anno 1532, quando vi andò la seconda volta". "Li cognomi non sono posti nel detto Libro, ma si sono tolti dal primo Registro che incomincia dal principio che la beata Angela eresse la Compagnia, nel quale sono notati i nomi et cognomi delle persone, et la divisione delle quadre, per distinguer le putte in Colonelli per la Città".

distorting Cozzano's information, reduced them to twelve, on the grounds that at the "Processo Nazari" Gallo had said: "there were fourteen of us ...".

Teresa Ledóchowska has also studied the subject, by making a comparison between the information given in Cozzano's *Dichiarazione*, in Faino's manuscript and in the *Secondo Libro Generale*. <sup>59</sup> We are giving here the result of our own research, based on certain documents, some of which have been unknown up to now.

We will take into consideration:

- the Christian name recalled by Cozzano,

- the Christian and family names or any other determining factor given by Faino in his manuscript,

- the Christian and family names fixed by Faino in the printed edition, and this will be followed by the biographical information which we collected together.

We are setting out these sets of three names in the same order as Cozzano listed the first virgins of the Company.

Simona Simona di Borno da Navi Simona Borni

We find a Simona, maid-servant to Maria Avogrado without any further identification, in the 1537 act of Angela's election and also in the 1558 list of members which is to be found in the Secondo Libro Generale.<sup>60</sup> This seems to be a list of names of the members of the re-united Company, after the crisis which flared up following the Decree imposing the wearing of the cincture (as we will see in Pt.III, Ch.I.). In a notarial act of 1545, the one of the election of the procurators of the Company, a "Simona Morganti de Bornado" indeed is mentioned, and in some other acts of 1555 and 1556, there is mention of a "Simona quondam D. Johannis Mariae de Bornato de Navis", member of the Company. This is perhaps one and the same person, whose surname would become fixed later on as "Borni", the name given her by Faino.

59 LEDÓCHOWSKA, Angela, op. cit., I, pp.116-124.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>60</sup> For this information and for the rest in this section we refer to the following sources: Angela's act of election 1537, D6; Veronica Buzzi's act of election, D26; Isabetta Prato's, SLG, f.55v; for the 1558 list, SLG, f.100r-v; notarial act of 1545, D27; notarial act of 1555, D28; notarial act of 156, D29; notarial act of 31 May 1558, D30; notarial act of 31 July 1558, D31; notarial act of 1559, D33.

Una putta di Dolza Drusilla Catherina figlia della Dolza Caterina Dolci and Un'altra putta di Dolza Drusilla Domenega figlia della Dolza Domenica Dolci

Two sisters, Caterina and Domenica, appear in the notarial act of Angela's election; but these are the daughters of Antonio Gosio. In the 1545 deed there is a "Catharina Antonii de Gotiis"; in the notarial acts of 1555 and 1556 the two "de Gotiis" sisters appear together. But we did not succeed in identifying these with the daughters of Dolza Drusilla mentioned by Cozzano.

Laura

This Laura is cited by Cozzano without any other information. Faino does not mention any Laura among the twelve Varallo pilgrims. Among those voting in 1537, we discovered a "Laura da Caino", daughter of Angelo who was a baker, and in the election of 1545 there is a "Laura magistri Anzoli Cinaleis". Would these two "Lauras", both "daughters of Angelo", perhaps be the same person?

On the other hand, there exists, in the 1558 list, a "Laura di Pischeri", but we will be presenting her later, with her sister Paola. We have to wait until 1559 until another Laura appears in the list of those belonging to the Company, but her surname is Usupini. We did not find

any other Laura.

Andriana Andriana di Zanbelli

She was one of those who elected Angela in 1537; she also participated in the election of the procurators of the Company in 1545. On both occasions her name is given as "Andreana di mastro Natale di Zabelli". She appears again, with the same name, in the notarial acts of 1555-1556, together with her sister Giulia. They are both mentioned in Ginevra Luzzago's will. Ginevra left them the usufruct of a room "toto tempore earum vitae, et donec perseveraverint seu perseverabunt ad au-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>61</sup> ASM, Fondo di Religione, registro n.223, Brescia S. Affra alias S. Salvatore (Lateranensi), ff.66v-67r. D32.

diendam Regulam praedictam, et recipienda divina officia et ministeria in dicta ecclesia Sanctae Affrae iuxta consuetum". We dare not identify her with the one called "Andreana da Rumano" in the minutes of the election of Veronica Buzzi (1555) and that of Isabetta Prato (1572).

Peregrina Peregrina di Cazali Peregrina Casali

We discovered only one person with this name in the Secondo Libro Generale, a Peregrina who, at the 1555 chapter of election of Veronica Buzzi, is presented in her role as "colonella del Duomo", and she votes for both herself and for her daughter Cecilia. But in a 1545 notarial act, a "Peregrina Petri de Cozalibus de Salodio" is mentioned, and another act, in 1559, speaks of a "Peregrina da Seniga". We found no information about the family name of "Casali" or "Cazali" suggested by Faino.

Una Peschera Paola di Pescheri Paula Peschiera and Un'altra Peschera Laura di Pescheri Laura Peschiera

Paola and Laura Peschiera are both included in the 1558 list of members. Paola will be present also at the 1572 election of Isabetta Prato, and will be elected "mistress" shortly afterwards. We found the "polizza d'estimo" of the two sisters for the year 1568:62 Paola aged 55 years, and Laura aged 52 years, daughters of the late Doctor Gianpiero Peschiera, were claiming their rights to legacies which were being contested by some close relatives.

Chiara Gaffura Chiara Gaffurri Chiara Gafurri

Chiara Gaffura also features in the list of the virgins in 1558, together with her sister Taddea; they will both take part in the election of Isabetta Prato in 1572.

Chiara and Taddea Gaffura (or Gaffurri) were the daughters of Andrea, 63 as is given in the "polizza d'estimo" drawn up for the 1548 tax-

PE. n.103. Cf. infra, Pt.III, Ch.III, 1.b.
 PE. n.62, anno 1548.

returns. In this declaration, Andrea said that his age was 45 years; thus, in 1532 (that is, the year of the pilgrimage to Varallo), he would have been only 29 and Chiara just a little girl. Nor can she be identified with the "Clara quae habitat in domo Pauli de Angulo civis et habitatoris Brixiae", who was elected "virgin of the government" in 1537, since Andrea's daughter was still an adolescent at that time.

Barbara Barbara di Fontani Barbara Fontani

Doneda states that Angela had lived the last years of her life "in the company of a good maiden called Barbara Fontana, who survived her, although only for a short time", and he adds a note: "There is proof of this in the books of the Company of St Ursula". It can be assumed that she was the daughter of the "mastro Gian Pietro Fontana" who had inherited the Office book belonging to Angela. We do not think she can be identified with the "Barbara de Monteclaro" who was elected "virgin of the government" at the 1537 chapter at which Gian Pietro Fontana participated precisely as a witness. It would not make much sense for the notary, after having identified him, to call his daughter by the name of Montichiari, her town of origin, instead of by her father's surname or at least by his Christian name.

Chiara Chiara da Martinengo Chiara da Martinengo

It does not seem to us that this Chiara da Martinengo can be identified with a hypothetical "Chiara di Martinengo" or "Chiara Martinengo" as she would have been called if she belonged to the noble Martinengo family. This other Chiara, about whom we know nothing, probably originated from Martinengo. Furthermore, the eldest daughter of the twenty children of Ippolita Gambara and Cesare Martinengo the Magnificent, called Chiara, had been born 16 November 1499 and had died suddenly on 30 August 1516.66

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>64</sup> DONEDA, *Vita, op. cit.*, p.53 and p.142. "in compagnia di una buona vergine di nome Barbara Fontana, la quale a lei sopravisse, quantunque per breve tempo"; "Consta dai libri della Compagnia di S. Orsola".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>65</sup> T. LEDÓCHOWSKA would seem to lean towards this conclusion, *Angela, op. cit.*, I, p.122. We think we have discovered another line of enquiry; cf. infra, Pt.II, Ch.VIII, 3.a. (TN: in Italian, the preposition "di" usually indicates "belonging to", and "da" "coming from").

<sup>66</sup> GUERRINI, Una celebre famiglia lombarda. I Conti di Martinengo. Studi e ricerche genealogiche, Brescia, tipolitografia F.lli Geroldi, 1930, pp.415-416.

Margarita Margarita Maria dell'Olmo Margarita dell'Olmo

We did not find any trace of a Margarita dell'Olmo or Olmi in any of the documents which we know. We do know that a certain "Margarita da Brescia" was elected "virgin of the government" in 1537, and she is perhaps the same whom we will meet in 1555 as "colonella" of St Afra, at the election of Veronica Buzzi.

Maria

Maria Bertoletti

Among those who elected Angela in 1537, we know a Maria, daughter of Bertolino da Leno; we will meet her later as "colonella" of S. Faustino.

"Maria, Scholastica et Lucretia sorores, filiae magistri Bertolini de Garginis [Garginis?]" figure in the notarial act of 1545 and also in the act of Veronica Buzzi's election, "D. Maria da Leno colonella di S. Faustino, et D. Scholastica et D. Lucretia tutte trei sorelle". Twice, therefore, it is stated that three sisters are involved, and this helps us to correct the error contained in the 1558 list, in the Secondo Libro Generale, where Scholastica is given as the daughter of Maria.<sup>67</sup>

But we did not find any Bertoletti. Once again it could be a case of a family name being adapted, as used to happen at that period and as we have already pointed out elsewhere.

Drusilla di Zinelli Dorosilla Zinelli

No member of the Company seems to us to have carried this name. We found only a "Derusiana Cinalia", daughter of Marc'Antonio, among the 1537 electors. In the notarial act of 1545 there is a "Damisella quondam magistri Marc'Antonio de Cinaliis".

## b) 25 November 1535

After being prepared by meetings<sup>68</sup> and by spiritual formation for a few years, the little group which Angela had probably quite often gath-

67 SLG, f.100v.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>68</sup> Faino, who described the pictures in the oratory of Isabetta Prato, gave the date there as 2 December 1533. Cf. supra, Pt.II, Ch.VI, 2.

ered round her in the oratory of Isabetta Prato, was admitted to the Company. There were twenty-eight of them, but we cannot say what percentage they represented with regard to the rest of the aspirants who were undergoing formation, nor can we say from which social background they came.

We have already pointed out why Angela had chosen 25 November: it was the feast of the martyr-saint Catherine of Alexandria, upon whose finger Christ himself had slipped the wedding-ring, and it was also the anniversary of her return to Brescia after the pilgrimage to the Holy

Land.

Doneda writes: "It has not emerged whether any other ceremonial was used, apart from writing their names under the above-mentioned date in a small book specially prepared for this purpose, and which still exists today". And he adds in a note: "A small book, in quarto format, is kept in the Archives of the Company; it has a white cardboard cover and on the outside there is the following inscription:

## 1535, 25th Day of November.

In this little book are inscribed all the virgins who belong to the Company of Saint Ursula; they meet every Friday for Holy Communion, and every last Saturday to listen to the reading of the Holy Rule called of Saint Ursula. In the said book are inscribed, in the following manner, the names of all the sisters who entered the Company in 1535, 1536, 1537 and 1538:

## 1535, 25th Day of November. The Reverend Mother Sister Angela.

This is the Blessed Foundress, and her name is followed by 28 others. The same method is used for the next three years:

## 1536. 25th Day of November, etc.".69

Nothing is said about where the ceremony took place, whether it was in the oratory of the Cathedral square or at St Afra. Doneda has

<sup>69</sup> DONEDA, Vita, op. cit., p.76 and p.150. "Nell'Archivio della Compagnia si conserva un libretto in forma di quarto coperto di cartone bianco, che ha di fuori questa iscrizione:

1535. die 25 Novembris.

Questo si è lo libretto dove sono scrite tute le Virgene, quale se domanda la compagnia de Santa Ursula, dove se congregano hogni venerdi del mese a la Santa Comunione, e hogni ultima domenicha del mese a scoltar a legere la Santa Regola intitulata a Santa Ursula. Nel detto libretto sono descritte tutte le consorelle della Compagnia, che entrarono in essa gli anni 1535, 1536, 1537 and 1538, nella seguente maniera, cioè: 1535. Die 25 Novembris.

La Rda. Madre Suor Angela.

Questa è la Beata Fondatrice, dopo la quale ne seguono altre al numero di 28, e lo stesso metodo continua negli altri tre anni.

no doubt: it was in the parish church near which Angela was living and where Father Serafino da Bologna, Canon of the Lateran,<sup>70</sup> her confessor, had his lodging. Faino, on the other hand, thought that the act of admission to the Company had taken place in Isabetta Prato's oratory.<sup>71</sup>

We did not discover any documentation on the subject.

There is, however, no doubt at all about the date, even though, among ancient authors and even here and there in the pages of the Processes, one frequently finds the year 1537 given as the foundation date of the Company. This fact is easily explained if it is remembered that the first General Chapter had taken place in that year, with the aim of electing a legal representative, with the right to act on behalf of the Company. On 18 March 1537, Angela had been elected mother, minister and treasurer for life, by unanimous voice: "et viva voce et nemine discrepante".

The minutes of this first capitular assembly 72 record the names of

those present and of those elected to the various offices.

It would be interesting to be able to identify at least some of the seventy-five virgins present, but this would require a prolonged search among the "polizze d'estimo". We have already met above Maria, the daughter of Bertolino da Leno; we recognise there Flora, Girolamo Patengola's servant-girl, mentioned earlier, who was 43 years old in 1537. We also meet there the servant or servants of certain personalities of the aristocratic or political world: Giovanni Chizzola, Girolamo Patengola, Tomaso Gavardo, Maria Avogadro and Lucrezia Luzzago.

The social background of the virgins is not always indicated; but when it is given in the notarial act, the cross-section reveals quite a variety of origin: five daughters of a goldsmith and one daughter of a tradesman in spices and perfumes; daughters of bakers and small farmers; the daughter of a ser Daniele Fruscato, probably a man of law, and also the sister of the Reverend Don Bernardino Grossi. And all "united and in harmony amongst themselves, all of one will and living in obedience to the Rule, for all is there".<sup>74</sup>

The foundation seems to come alive again in Romanino's splendid painting, "The Mystic Marriage of St Catherine of Alexandria", which today is in the Brooks Memorial Gallery at Memphis (Tennessee, USA),

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., p.75.

<sup>71</sup> FAINO, Vita, op. cit., p.48.

<sup>72</sup> D6.

<sup>73</sup> PE. n.225, Patengola Girolamo, 1534.

<sup>74</sup> Ricordi, 5th Counsel.

Kress collection, and which belonged formerly to the Maffei collection at Brescia. It measures 153 x 207.7cm.

Giovanni Vezzoli<sup>75</sup> thinks that it had a deliberate commemorative purpose: the mystic marriage of the Saint celebrated on 25 November

would recall the date of the foundation of the Company.

Catherine, kneeling, is receiving the ring on her finger from the Child Jesus, held on the knees of the Madonna who is in the centre of the picture. According to the same Vezzoli, St Lawrence, on the left, could well be the portrait of Lorenzo Muzio, who had approved the Rule on 8 August 1536. On the right, behind the Madonna, stands St Ursula holding her white standard with the cross, while Angela, dressed as a Franciscan tertiary, is kneeling, with her hands joined together.

Rossana Bossaglia<sup>76</sup> thinks that this picture must have been painted during the central period of Gerolamo da Romano, in other words about 1530, "because of the silvery reflection on the folds of the dresses, and by the way the Saint is portrayed ... and the Virgin as well, with a finesse, reminiscent of Cranach, all of which points to it still belonging to the Cremonese period. The headdress of the Virgin, a ridiculous but magnificent turban which seems to come straight out of Bramantino, and the nocturnal atmosphere, full of luminous reflections, make this painting one on its own in Romanino's career. If we think we can see Salvoldo's influence in the taste for the nocturnal shades, we would have to place the painting much later, but then it would be difficult to know where to place it. Madame Ferrari, Romanino p.47, is inclined towards a date later than 1535, taking into consideration that the presence of the figures of St Angela Merici and St Ursula, both together on the right, is explained by the foundation of the Order of the Ursulines of St Angela which was in 1535. This is a very valid argument providing, however, that these two figures, rather decadent in style and pushed into a corner of the composition, were painted at the same time as the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>75</sup> GIOVANNI VEZZOLI, *Incontri di S. Angela Merici con l'arte*, in: Società per la storia della Chiesa a Brescia. "Fonti e Studi n.5", *Studi in onore di Luigi Fossati*, Brescia, novembre 1974, pp.394-396.

<sup>76</sup> ROSSANA BOSSAGLIA, *La pittura del Cinquecento: i maggiori e i loro scolari*, in *Storia di Brescia, op. cit.*, pp.1052-1053. "... per l'argenteo dispiegarsi dei panni e per la tipologia della Santa... e infine per quella della Vergine, di finezza cranachiana, e quindi ancora inserita nella cerchia cremonese. Il copricapo della Vergine, un assurdo magnifico turbante che sembra tirato fuori dal Bramantino, e l'atmosfera notturna, piena di luministici riflessi, isolano l'opera nell'iter del Nostro. Se nel gusto del notturno volessimo ravvisare un certo savoldismo, dovremmo portare il quadro assai avanti nel tempo, quando però non troveremmo un posto adeguato ove collocarlo. La Ferrari, *Romanino* p.47, pensa a una datazione oltre il 1535 considerando che le figure di S. Angela Merici e S. Orsola appaiate sulla destra si spiegano con la fondazione dell'Ordine delle Orsoline di S. Angela che è del 1535. Argomento assai valido; sempre che, però, le due figure, di qualità piuttosto scadente e stipate in un angolo della composizione, siano state dipinte in una con le altre. Ci atterremmo perciò 'alla datazione verso il '30', proposta dal Longhi".

others. We are inclined, therefore, to support Longhi's dating of 'about 1530'".77

As for ourselves, we agree with the view expressed by Giovanni Vezzoli: "It is not easy to subscribe to such a suggestion: the two figures form an integral part of the whole composition, a perfect cohesiveness with the rest by the play of light, by the gradual increase of the volumes and light with regard to the Virgin's mantle. The banner is typical of Romanino, as indeed is the figure of Saint Ursula.... It is certainly a picture carried out at the request of someone who had an important role in the Company and therefore wanted to record its foundation in such a singular fashion".<sup>78</sup>

The catalogue of the exhibition at the Royal Academy of Arts at London (25 November 1983-11 March 1984) is of the same opinion, giving the date of the painting as 1535, or a little later. It points out that "the composed, dignified figures, harmoniously arranged in a row, are uncharacteristic of Romanino and make this work exceptional in his oeuvre; there is no heightened drama or movement, but instead a strong

sense of religious intimacy".79

Angela is easily recognisable by those who know Moretto's portrait of her after her death: the thin face with high cheek-bones, prominent nose, pronounced lower lip. Thus, the portrait appears to be very close to a real model, in no way idealised. The habit is the one which the women of the Third Order of St Francis used to wear at that time. The Madonna's silky garment seems to absorb all the light of the picture and to spread out like a wedding mantle, linking together the three virgins who are all gazing at Christ, while Lawrence is enfolded in the shadow. In the background, Brescia and its castle are plunged in the darkness of the night.

The APC, in 1758, took two other pictures into consideration, both of which could also have been intended to commemorate 25 November 1535, although they are on a much smaller scale and are notably of an inferior quality from the artistic point of view. The first disappeared at

<sup>77</sup> For the author mentioned, MARIA LUISA FERRARI, Il Romanino, Milan 1962.

<sup>79</sup> The Genius of Venice 1500-1600, edited by JANE MARTINEAU and CHARLES HOPE, Royal Academy of Arts, London 1983, Catalogue published in association with Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London,

p.202.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>78</sup> GIOVANNI VEZZOLI, *Incontri*, *op. cit.*, p.395. "Non è agevole accedere a tale sospetto: le due figure sono inserite nel quadro, con assoluto rispetto della compagine dell'insieme, con perfetta coerenza con il resto per la luce, per la crescita graduale dei volumi e del lume rispetto al manto della Vergine. Il vessillo è tipicamente romaniano, come romaniana è la figura di sant'Orsola... Si tratta certo d'un quadro, fatto dipingere da persona che aveva gran parte nella Compagnia e perciò anche gran desiderio di ricordarne la fondazione con un documento così singolare".

the time of the bombing of the church of St Afra during the Second World War. Fortunately the photographic plate of it is kept in the Pinacoteca Tosio-Martinengo of Brescia. It represents (we are quoting the inscription at the bottom of the picture and which was given by the notary in the APC) "La B. Agela Brisciana vergine, fondatrice della nova cogregatioe de vergine, detta la Copagnia di S. Orsola". 80 Seated in the midst of six virgins, three on each side, Angela is pointing out to them the Bernardine monogram of IHS and is pronouncing the words "Hic est amor meus". The notary Angelo Facconi says that the virgins are "all dressed modestly in secular clothes, which are either black or dark grevish-beige in colour. But their little cap and shawl are all uniform, namely of white material and similar in style to what the Ursulines of this city are wearing at present". The expert Savanni points out that the veil of the virgins "has the form of the head-veils which the Ursulines of Brescia are wearing even today". Reproductions of this picture can still be seen in Vol.II of the Storia di Brescia 81, and in Merician literary publications varying in value and in importance.

When the picture was submitted during the process to the expertise of Francesco Monti, he gave the following opinion: "It is badly executed, especially from the point of view of design, and proves that the

painter was third-rate".

Expressing himself even more freely, the art-expert Francesco Savanni gave this judgment: "It is certainly an old work, and has been done by a painter of little talent, who has tried to conceal his lack of skill by imitating the style of great painters. In the figures of Blessed Angela and the young girls he has aped Romanino, and in the two angels he seems to have copied Raphael's style".

As for the date, Monti judged it to be 1540, "which is the year indicated in black colour on a seat and is by the hand of whoever has done the picture". Francesco Savanni just confined himself to pointing out the written date, but did not say anything about the date of the work.

We are publishing the notary's description in D36, in the section connected with the pictures which were in the oratory of the Company of St Ursula, an oratory adjoining the church of the same title in the Santa Croce district (today Via Moretto).

The second painting was in the church of St Ursula; we are giving the description of it in the same D36, in the appropriate section.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>80</sup> We wanted to keep the abbreviations as used by the notary and which can still be seen in the photographs of the painting, but an engraving of the same picture has written them in full. Cf. D36. <sup>81</sup> Storia di Brescia, op. cit., II, p.456.

This is what the notary Facconi says about it: "... it represents the Blessed dressed in the usual habit of a Franciscan Tertiary; she is sitting in the midst of nine virgins, who are likewise seated, dressed in secular but modest clothes. Angela herself, and six of the said virgins, are each holding a book in the hand and it looks as if she is in the act of giving this pious assembly some spiritual advice. Above the head of blessed Angela, one can see the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove, surrounded by rays and shining lights. On one of the seats there is this inscription: 'La B. Madre Angela apre la sua Regola et fonda la Compagnia nel giorno di S.ta Catterina. MDXXXV'".

As to the art-expert Francesco Monti, he says: "In the top row of all these pictures, the one nearest to the sanctuary shows Blessed Angela dressed as a Franciscan Tertiary, sitting in the midst of nine young girls all modestly dressed, but in secular clothes, who likewise are seated. She herself, and six of the young girls, are each holding a book in the hand, and she is in the act of talking and they of listening. At the top of the picture, above the head of the Blessed, is depicted the dove, symbol of the Holy Spirit, surrounded by light, rays and clouds. In addition to the Franciscan habit, I can recognise the features of Bl. Angela in the central figure, and for this reason I hold it for certain that this is her image. Among the pictures in this church, this is the most deplorable one from the artistic point of view, and it seems to me that there is no longer any other painting by this artist. All the painting is by the same hand; if anything had been added to it later, I would be able to tell, because in such a case the unity of parts which we see here could never have been achieved".

And here is the expert opinion of Francesco Savanni: "In the upper row, the painting nearest to the sanctuary is the work of a very mediocre painter, one who is not very well known to me, but who seems to me to belong to the same period as the others. <sup>82</sup> In this picture Blessed Angela is seen seated in the middle of nine young secular women, to whom she appears to be speaking, a book in her hand. Above her head one can see the Holy Spirit in the figure of a dove, which is spreading shafts and rays of light among the clouds. Looking at her physiognomy and her habit of the Third Order of St Francis, and also at the inscription painted on a seat, I am certain that it is Blessed Angela".

This "inscription painted on a seat" is to be seen again today precisely in a painting at Bagnolo Mella, which develops the same theme:

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>82</sup> The experts attribute these pictures to the period 1650-1700. We know that they were painted about 1670-1671. Cf. infra, Pt.III, Ch.IV, 2.b

Angela, mother and mistress, among eight virgins, and above her head the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove. It is either a "remake", or we have here that very same picture, so damaged, though, as to make it difficult, for whoever restored it, to discover the original design.

As for recognising the physiognomy of Blessed Angela, the two experts, who were speaking in 1758, were clearly taking as their guide the traditional features in earlier representations, modelled on Moretto's portrait of Angela after her death and on the one on the wooden board of the tomb.

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# Chapter VIII THE COMPANY IN ACT

The foundation of the Company was a venture which brought Angela face to face with difficulties of a practical nature; in other words, she had to find the best way of helping her daughters live out their consecration to God while remaining in the world, and to do this until the end of their days.

But it was perhaps even more difficult to surmount the difficulties of a psychological nature. People were accustomed to seeing consecrated souls only in a religious habit and behind the grille of the monastic enclosure, while members of the Third Orders were looked upon as being linked with a first Order, masculine, and to a second Order, feminine. The virgins of the Company were not religious, nor were they supported by a masculine Order. Nor were they the simple associates of some pious devotional confraternity. Thus, they could have felt a certain malaise, not quite knowing where they fitted into the Church.

Public opinion, and above all the members of the Company themselves, needed to have clear ideas on the subject. Among other things, they needed to know that, although remaining in the world, these virgins no longer belonged to the world; although they were each living at home, they were not, however, isolated from one another because their common rule of life established them in an organic "togetherness" which was unique, autonomous, well supported by proper structures and well protected by the awareness that they shared a common spiritual experi-

ence.

Through the analysis of various documents, some already known and others not, we have brought out the main lines of the original design conceived by Angela for the persons in charge in the Company. While throwing some light on their tasks, we have also been able to add some biographical details which have enabled us to fit into a concrete and historically based setting certain members of the government up to now known only by name.

#### 1. THE LEGISLATION

In order to guide her disciples in this new form of life, to make it clear to them how it would be carried out, and to set before them a spirituality, Angela dictated the Regola for all the members of the Company, the Ricordi for the "colonelle" (members of the Company and immediate district superiors), the Testamento (or Legati) for the high-born "matrons", otherwise known as "lady-governors" (that is, a type of major superior, but although they had a leading role in the Company, they were not "members" of it).

The Regola constituted the carrying-structure of the Company, the one path that each and every sister would have to follow, each one personally responsible and everyone together, if they wanted to persevere

and carry out their vocation to its fulfilment.1

The Merician Regola is certainly not a "rough draft", as is stated by Luigi Rinaldini,² but on the contrary a complete document.³ It includes in fact: the clear title of the Company, the conditions for entry (including liberty of choice), the minimum age for entry, the guide-lines regarding the way the virgins must dress and of their "contact with the world", the practical points about penance, liturgical and private prayer, the way of living the evangelical counsels, and a whole chapter on the composition and the functions of government. The entire work, which clearly bears the imprint of its time, is permeated by Angela's great wisdom and by a deep realism.

Thus, it is surprising the way Rinaldini speaks about it, when he writes: "The Regola consists of a Prologue and ten chapters, all of a spiritual nature, and an eleventh chapter, entitled 'Government', almost entirely concerned with economic and organisational matters. This particular chapter, although only embryonic, makes the Company very similar to one of those numerous pious lay-associations, where administrative preoccupation is an overriding concern and where, consequently, the contribution of competent and influential persons in this field is of the utmost importance".4

1 Regola, Prologue.

<sup>2</sup> RINALDINI. Edizione anastatica, op. cit., p.8 and passim.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> We are referring to D3, where Turlino's printed edition is published opposite the Trivulzian ms. <sup>4</sup> RINALDINI, *Edizione anastatica, op.cit.*, pp.289-290. "... risulta composta da un Proemio e di dieci capi tutti di carattere spirituale e di un XI capo, intitolato 'Del Governo' di carattere pressoché interamente economico, organizzativo, nella sua embrionalità tale tuttavia da far assomigliare la Compagnia ad una delle tante opere pie di carattere laicale, ove prevale la preoccupazione amministrativa e quindi l'apporto di persone competenti e influenti in tale campo". The composition of the Regola into a prologue and eleven chapters is explained on pages 21-22 by Rinaldini himself, who re-

It is true that the evangelical counsels were not set down in the juridical form which they later were to assume; the members of the Company, in actual fact, would not have had to pronounce the religious vows. But hagiography is full of the figures of women, and even of very young girls, who had taken the vow of virginity and had consecrated themselves to God, turning down any idea of marriage and remaining faithful to their promise, sometimes even to the point of martyrdom. Thus, it is reasonable to hold the view that, from the very beginning of the Company, some of the members would have wanted to make this vow in private. Such a step, though, would have been a free, personal choice, not an institutional act.

But what the Regola demanded, and from everyone, was the firm resolve to persevere in the state of perfect chastity. It was only after Cardinal Borromeo had given permission to the virgins of the Company which he himself had set up in Milan to make the vow of chastity in public, that those of Brescia asked if they could do the same. But this was certainly not the general practice, and even less a factor of discrimination within the Company.

What could escape notice on a first reading is the elevated spirituality which permeates the Regola, and also the fact that the other two Merician Writings, even though they are written from a different angle according to the different categories of people to whom they are addressed, provide the necessary clarification and appropriate interpretation of the normative contents of the Regola. Thus, for example, in the chapter on the Mass, the recommendation "not to spend too much time in churches" could easily be explained by certain practices, very general in those days, whereby churches were changed into not very edifying

fers to "the edition printed in 1582 and confirmed by St Charles". With regard to the "preceding copies" to which he draws attention on p.26, he cites "the untraceable original" and "the copy recopied into the 'secondo libro bollato', ordered in 1546, but probably carried out only in 1572, and the one which was printed by Damiano Turlino ...". It is a fact that the original is lost today. But we think it is our duty to make clear that there has only ever been one "libro bollato", that of 1546, lost from time immemorial and about which, up to the present, nothing whatsoever has been discovered, not even a description. There does exist, on the other hand, the Secondo Libro Generale, dating from 1572, into which the Merician Writings were recopied, albeit with the errors which we have already pointed out in Pt.I, Ch.I, 3.c. We draw attention to the article by TERESA LEDÓ-CHOWSKA, La Regola del 1582 può esprimere in maniera assoluta lo spirito originale della Compagnia di Sant'Orsola e il pensiero di Sant' Angela? in "Brixia Sacra", anno VI, n.5-6, Settembre-Dicembre 1971. This article, however, is not enough to refute all the errors and confusion in Rinaldini's volume. <sup>5</sup> In the Regola della Compagnia di Santa Orsola, printed at Milan in 1567, it says in Ch.VIII: "... in the case that someone wants to make the vow of virginity, she should not be in a hurry to do it ... but first of all she should consult her confessor and the prior general ...". And LOMBARDI says that 21 January 1568 was the first time that some virgins took the vow of chastity, with the consent of the bishop of Brescia, Domenico Bollani. Cf. Vita, op. cit., pp.204-205.

meeting-places and places where various business activities were carried on.<sup>6</sup> But it takes on its real meaning in the 7th Counsel, where Angela makes this recommendation to the "colonelle": "Restrain your daughters especially from familiarity with young men, and other men too, even if they are spiritual, because too close a spiritual familiarity with men nearly always degenerates into carnal familiarity". It is not just a question of avoiding disedifying practices, as the Regola could lead one to believe, but of preserving that integrity, that virginity of spirit which is the essence of the nuptial gift that the virgin offers to Christ as a response of love to his overture of love.

Herein lies the heart of Angela Merici's message: Christ has taken the first step towards her by his initiative of love; he is the "Lover". Angela calls him this three times in her Writings: "my Lover, or rather, the Lover of each one of us", "my Lover, or rather ours", "the Lover of us all", he, the "gentle, loving Spouse, Jesus Christ".

The specific note of Angela's spirituality would be the contemplation of this mystery of Christ-Spouse, in the loving tension of one's own

being and acting, reaching out towards him.

To make this mystery of Christ-Spouse present in the Church, to give witness to it in the world by one's life and by one's word, this would be the charism which Angela would bequeath to her daughters so that they might keep it alive in the centuries to come.

We would like here to let a theologian, Father Valentino Macca, speak on the subject: "In the climate of renewal in the Church of her day, Angela lived out in her own life, in an extraordinary way, the mystery of the Church as 'Spouse'. It is this which formed the axis of her thought and her way of acting, the most striking note of her experience, of her spirituality, of her maternity as a foundress. This, at least, is what emerges with the utmost certainty from the Regola, the Ricordi, the Legati, the authentic mirror of her soul and the revelation of her way of 'feeling' Christ, of 'welcoming' Christ, of 'responding' to Christ, 'our gentle, loving Spouse, Jesus Christ'. (Rule, Ch.XII).

Ricordi, 5th and Last Counsels; Testamento, Last Legacy. D4, D5. See also COZZANO, Epistola D22

[f.961v]; Regola, Chapter on Government.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> TACCHI VENTURI, SJ, Storia, op. cit., Parte I, pp.201-214. Even during the liturgical celebrations, there was no lack of irreverent behaviour, and this bad custom continued over the years, so much so that two bishops, Ferretti and Duranti, felt obliged to include in the Constitutions which they promulgated for the diocese of Brescia, a chapter entitled: "De non vagando tempore divinorum officiorum in Ecclesiis". In it they warned the people to avoid unbecoming behaviour under pain of excommunication. I.P. FERRETTUM, Constitutiones et Edicta, op. cit., cap.XXXXV, p.[71]; B.Vat, Racc.I.IV.2177. int.3. DURANTE card. DURANTI, Constitutiones, Brixiae, apud Ludovicum Britannicum, A.D.MDLII, f.[11r-v], BQ, Cinquecentine, E.137.m.l.

"Within the path of the vocation to virginity, the 'nuptial' spirituality starts from the theological conviction that the initiative comes from the 'Lover' (Last Counsel; Last Legacy), who 'chooses' and 'calls' 'to be the true and chaste brides' of the Lord (Rule, Prologue). It is a great grace and dignity (cf. Rule, Prologue) which demands a corresponding love. The requirements of the Rule, with its climate of courageous and joyful asceticism, are directed towards a mysticism which, by abandoning the virgin to the action of the Spirit, wants to help her to 'please Jesus Christ, [her] Spouse, as much as possible' (4th Legacy). In this way he becomes the 'All' of the spouse, according to a remarkable text of the Rule (cf. Ch.XI). In this way alone does Christ become 'the only treasure' of the virgin, that is her 'Love' (cf. 5th Counsel). In Angela's eyes, it is the only way that the virgin can live to the full her nuptial fidelity and 'give honour to Jesus Christ to whom she has promised her virginity and her whole life' (cf. 5th Counsel).

"It is the fidelity of the unitive love by which the virgin, like the Church and with her, is 'holy, without speck or wrinkle or anything like that', for ever stretching out towards the colloquy-communion, the echo of which has been transmitted to us in the last words of Revelation, in the dialogue between the Spirit of Jesus and the Beloved: 'Come'.

"It is the fidelity of the meeting which, in faith and love, keeps the virgin continually stretching forward towards the 'resplendent face' of the Lover, because he and he alone is her 'life and hope', and in his 'divine love', as in a 'consuming furnace', she longs for him to 'consume' (cf. Rule VI) all that she is and all that she possesses".

And from this nuptial relationship with Christ, lived fully, consciously and faithfully, proceeds the grace of a spiritual motherhood which Ursulines must exercise, following the example of their first mother, by the witness of their lives and by the ministry of the word. "Spouse" and "mother", in the image of the Church and in the likeness of Angela, such is the identity of the Ursuline, therefore, whether she is religious or secular.

But let us return to the Rule.

The key to understanding the Company – and it is also the keystone to it – is to be found, it seems to us, in the Prologue to the Regola; it is synthesized in the opening lines which the Foundress addresses to her daughters: "God - has granted you the grace – of withdrawing you from the darkness of this wretched world – and of calling you together – to serve his divine Majesty".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> From a conference given at Brescia on 11 February 1985.

This "together" would be their strength. And then, in order to build up and to train her daughters in a real "awareness of the Institute", Angela seeks to ensure a close sense of unity at the bottom, a good rapport between the two groups at the top, and close links between the top and the bottom.

To help those at the bottom to acquire the sense of belonging to a really organised body, Angela gives it the name of "Company"; she makes it clear that the Rule is the path along which they must all walk together; she exhorts them to embrace it "with one will", she fixes general meetings. She arranges, for example, for "a spiritual director ... for all" to be elected in view of the general communion every first Friday which will bring them together in a communal celebration. 10

In the chapter on government, Angela even suggests some communitarian structures: if a sister (and this expression conjures up in itself a family bond) is left alone in life, then another sister must be willing to take her into her house and the Company must come to her aid financially. But if it should happen that some sisters, even if there are only two, are left without support in life or have difficulty in finding accommodation, then the Company must find a house for them and even provide material aid, thereby giving concrete witness to the fact that the member belongs to the whole body, and to the responsibility of the whole body towards the individual. When the older sisters can no longer support themselves, they will be helped and looked after "as befits true spouses of Jesus", and the sick will be visited and cared for, day and night if it is necessary. The sister, in her turn, at the end of her life will "make a bequest to the Company as a token of love and charity towards the sisters".

Even by themselves these norms would suffice to give a community dimension to the life of the Company; the chapter on government ends, moreover, with an exterior demonstration not devoid of a certain symbolism: when a sister dies "all the others in their charity will accompany her to her burial place, walking two by two, each carrying a candle".

But it is in the *Ricordi* and the *Testamento* that one finds the images of the family, the vine, the mighty fortress and impregnable tower, all applied to the Company. As a matter of fact, it is to the members of the government that Angela seems to entrust the fraternal communion among the virgins as a kind of family possession, to be built up and pro-

10 Ibid., Ch.VIII.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Regola, Prologue. Unless indicated otherwise, the quotations and references are taken from the text of D2.

tected. The latter are charged with putting this communion into effect, into living it; the former, into safeguarding it: "So be on your guard and take special care that they are united in heart and will, as we read of the Apostles and other Christians of the early Church".<sup>11</sup>

Just as wise is the recommendation to organise frequent meetings among the "daughters", with someone who can give "a short sermon" to them: "In this way they will meet together as loving sisters, talking over spiritual things together, thus giving joy and encouragement to each other, and this will benefit them greatly". <sup>12</sup> It is this fraternal "to-

getherness" which helps to keep the heart undivided.

It is this witness of fraternal love which builds up the mystical body of Christ, hence Angela's insistence: "And on no account must you allow these seeds [of discord] to grow in the Company, for it would be an infection of bad example which would spread throughout the town and beyond". Hence also a warning with a prophetic note, almost as if she wanted to prevent the tensions which later on would lead to divisions and rivalry within the Merician family: "There will be no other sign that you are living in the Lord's favour save that of loving one another and being united together ... Thus mutual love and harmony between you are a sure sign that you are on the right path and pleasing to God. So, dear mothers and sisters, be watchful, because the devil will attack you especially in this matter under the guise of good".<sup>13</sup>

All these recommendations to the members of the government are going to have direct or indirect effects on those below. But there are other norms and counsels which directly concern the two governing bodies, namely the "matrons" and the "colonelle", because it is from

these that the structures take their strength and orientation.

Angela recommends to the "colonelle": "Be obedient to the lady-governors whom I am leaving behind in my place, because that is right. ... For in obeying them you obey me, and in obeying me you obey Jesus Christ".<sup>14</sup>

The strong union between the members in authority is the guarantee of that unity of government conducive to the unity of the base. With regard to the level of practical applications, we must draw special attention to the council meeting of the two groups united together, "matrons" and "colonelle", as is indicated in the 7th Legacy. It must take

<sup>11</sup> Testamento, 10th Legacy.12 Ibid., 8th Legacy.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 10th Legacy.

<sup>14</sup> Ricordi, 3rd Counsel.

place twice, or at least once a month, according to a kind of "order of the day" which consists of:

- the evaluation of the behaviour of the virgins,

- the review of their "requirements, both spiritual and temporal",

 the decisions to be taken according to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

The reciprocity of gift and service between the two groups of authority at the top, and between the top and the bottom is, for Angela, a way of safeguarding her institution. The virgins are expected to obey, but the members of the government must respect them, consult them and get them involved in a responsible way: "And if, according to times and needs, new rules should be made, or any change introduced, do it prudently and with good advice. And always may your first recourse be to gather together at the feet of Jesus Christ and there, all of you, with all your daughters, pray most fervently. For in this way, without any doubt, Jesus Christ will be in your midst ...". "All of you, with all your daughters": the ladies of the Brescian nobility, with the maidens of the Company – some of whom were their servants, or else the daughters of poor or illiterate folk – so that they all might feel co-responsible, as far as possible, for the options of "aggiornamento", which could emerge only from their community prayer together.

There is a similar prescription in the Rule:¹6 if one of those in a responsible position should die or be relieved of her office for some reason, it is "the Company" which must "meet to elect another to complete the number required". Unlettered or educated, poor or rich, servant or mistress, all the virgins are involved in the same way; when they elect, with equal rights, the new member of the government, they are giving witness to their shared responsibility with regard to the Institute itself as

well as to their unity.

Although it may seem to have a purely material character, there is one last element which can make a contribution towards strengthening this awareness of belonging to a whole; this is the existence of a common patrimony belonging to the Company, the management of which, entrusted to the matrons, will be undertaken and carried out in the name of and for the good of the virgins: "for the good and development of the Company, as prudence and motherly love dictate to you". 17

And for anyone who persists in some serious failing and is unwil-

16 Regola, Ch.XII.

<sup>15</sup> Testamento, Last Legacy.

<sup>17</sup> Testamento, 9th Legacy.

ling to correct herself, Angela envisages a very serious punishment: abandonment on the part of the Company. It is a drastic measure, an extreme remedy applied in the hope of a conscious and definitive cure, which the Foundress herself explains: "It may happen that the unhappy woman, when she sees she is abandoned and left alone, may come to repentance and a stronger desire to remain and persevere in the Company". It is the punishment of isolation to make one appreciate more what one has lost and to make one long to return to the fold. The basis of this argument is clearly biblical; it recalls the pedagogy of God who takes no pleasure in the death of the sinner, but in his changing his ways to win life, as is written in Ezekiel (33:11).

#### 2. THE GOVERNMENT

The hierarchical structure of the Company is defined in the chapter on government, in which the three categories of persons in charge, together with their respective areas of responsibility, are set out as follows:

- "four virgins from among the most capable of the Company", who "will act as teachers and guides in the way of the spiritual life". "We wish the four virgins mentioned above to have this special charge: to visit every fortnight (or more or less often as required) all the other virgins, their sisters, who live in the town, to encourage and help them if they are experiencing any disagreement or difficulty, physical or mental; or if any of those in charge at home do them any wrong, prevent them from doing any good, or expose them to the danger of doing evil. If they themselves cannot cope with the matter, they must refer it to the matrons mentioned above";

— "at least four widowed matrons who are prudent and are of honourable life". "The matrons will serve as mothers, full of concern for the good and the welfare of their spiritual daughters". Their representative function and social responsibility are confirmed by the notarial act of Angela's election: "quod quicquid factum et ordinatum et dispositum fuerit per eas, quod id valeat et valere debeat perinde ac si factum fuisset per omnes virgines dicte Societatis, promittentes semper de ratho habendo sub earum obligatione reali et personali". If it is to the "matrons" that the virgins in charge must refer when they themselves are unable to cope with some matter;

19 D6.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 5th Legacy.

— "four men who are mature and upright". They "will act as agents and fathers in the day-to-day needs of the Company". If the virgins and the matrons find themselves faced with insurmountable difficulties, "they should meet together with the four men so that all together they can work out some solution". And if it should happen that members of the Company needed support against some injustices of an economic nature to which they had fallen victim from their own families or from their employers, "or if any were in a similar plight which required a court-case or an informal settlement (which would be the better solution), then the four men, out of kindness and acting as fathers, should take on the business and help them as they need".

In the Trivulzian manuscript, the oldest one that is known today, no mention is made of the person appointed to preside over the government and to act as the legal representative of the Company. Nor would anyone dare to add it in Turlino's printed edition, out of respect for the original text dictated by Angela.<sup>20</sup>

From 8 August 1536, the date when the Rule was approved, the Company had become an institute officially recognised by the Church; no-one, however, had given thought to electing the legal representative for it.

In the meantime, Girolamo Patengola had died, leaving an inheritance of some possessions to the Company, and so it became necessary to invest someone with the right to receive them on behalf of the Company. Hence the first General Chapter of the Company and the notarial act drawn up by the notary Gian Girolamo Monti, for the election of the legal representative in matters involving the civil authority.

When this particular act was submitted to the judges at the process of canonisation, the calligraphy expert Vincenzo Bighelli would give the following judgment about it: "Having examined from beginning to end this instrument which I am holding in hand, dated 18 March 1537, executed by the notary Girolamo Monte, I judge it to be true, legitimate and authentic from every aspect. The parchment is ancient, and the character and the abbreviations belong to that period. This document, admittedly, is not the original, but having been examined and checked by the notary, it has been legally authenticated by his own signature and notarial paraph".<sup>21</sup> We are publishing this act as D6, taking it precisely from

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Cf. The chapter on government in the two texts in D3.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> APC. Vat. 341, f.881v. "Questo istromento che tengo in mano in data del 1537, 18 Marzo, rogato dal nodaro Girolamo Monte, considerato da capo a fondo io lo giudico vero, legittimo ed autentico per ogni sua circostanza. La pergamena è antica, ed il carattere e le abbreviature sono proprie di quel

the Atti del Processo, rather than from the Secondo Libro Generale, because

of this guarantee of agreement with the original.

At the Chapter summoned by Angela in her role of "auctrix dicte Societatis", which took place "in coquina domus habitationis", the following were present: Giovita, son of Cipriano da Rezzato, weaver; Giovanni fu Martino da Bovegno, carrier; Cipriano, son of Giovanni Concagnino, hat-maker; mastro Gian Pietro Fontana, shoe-maker, living at Brescia, in the St Afra district, "testibus rogatis, vocatis et notis".

There is no mention of any specific document for this particular event issued by the ecclesiastical authority, and it does not seem that anyone of ecclesiastical rank was present. The minutes simply refer to the "confirmatio" (in other words, the decree approving the Rule issued by the vicar-general Lorenzo Muzio and countersigned by the notary Bernardino Boarno) which "ibi visa et lecta fuit".<sup>22</sup>

The reason for calling the meeting was the following: in the Regola "pretermissum fuit quod elligi deberet una magistra generalis seu thesauraria seu priorissa dicte societatis, que gubernare deberet elimosinas et legata factas et facta, fiendas et fienda dicte confratrie seu societati, et quod

exigere possit dictas elimosinas et legata...".

Then, "facta oratione et invocatione Sanctissime Trinitatis", the virgins summoned together "eligerunt primo in earum matrem, ministram et thesaurariam prefatam D. Sur Angelam, et viva voce et nemine discrepante, que intelligatur et sit perpetua toto tempore eius vite, et ea mortua, quod una elligi debeat virgo per dictam societatem et in eius locum...". This last decision established the practice of succession by election, and the election of a virgin. Angela, however, would choose her successor herself, in the person of one of the noble widow-matrons, Lucrezia Lodrone, calling her, in the dedication to the *Testamento*, "principal lady-governor".

tempo. Questo, per verità, non è originale, ma, dal Nodaro veduto e riscontrato, è stato autenticato

legalmente con la propria sottoscrizione e segno del suo notariato".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> RINALDINI, (Edizione anastatica, op. cit., p.290) refers to a decree which Angela herself supposedly asked for, which led to an "intervention of the Vicar-general" on 18 March 1537. TERESA LEDÓ-CHOWSKA replies (La Regola, cit., p.9): "If such a decree exists, and if Father Rinaldini possesses some items of information on the subject, he should have indicated, in his 'critical edition', at least the archive reference to them. He has not done this".

With regard to this, RINALDINI (Ibid.) draws from his hypothetical decree the statement that "the Superior must be a virgin", and he concludes that this decree was not "interpolated" into the Rule probably because Lucrezia Lodrone was a widow. It is obvious, though, that the statement that "the Superior must be a virgin" was due to the resolution "quod una elligi debeat virgo" which was taken by the Chapter and recorded in the minutes by the notary. For the nomination of Lucrezia Lodrone, cf. infra, 3.b. The "matrones": Contessa Madonna Lucrezia.

Angela did not envisage assigning any governmental role to a

priest, as can be gathered from the following two rules:

- "... you must choose a place or a particular church where a spiritual director should be appointed for you all, a man who is prudent and mature in age, to whom everyone should go at least once a month for confession; and then, every first Friday of the month, you should meet together at this church and together receive Holy Communion from this priest";<sup>24</sup>

- "Each one of you should obey ... your spiritual director".<sup>25</sup> The right of each one to make a free choice of this "proprio padre spirituale" would be confirmed by the "Concessio".<sup>26</sup> of 27 September 1536, granted by the same Lorenzo Muzio, deputy and vicar-general of Bishop Cardinal Francesco Cornaro, who had approved the Rule on 8 August that

same year.

As one can see, the functions of the priests referred to in the Rule

are strictly of a spiritual nature.

As a result of the visit of Cardinal Borromeo to Brescia, the "spiritual father for you all" would become, as we shall see, a "special vicar" of the bishop, with authority over the Company ("sopra di questa Compagnia").<sup>27</sup>

#### 3. THE MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNMENT

Angela had foreseen, therefore, a completely lay institute and, what is more, feminine, reserving to the four men the tasks of consultors and of intermediaries in affairs of a temporal nature.

# a) The "virgins"

In first place, in the chapter on government, come the "four virgins from among the most capable of the Company". The same order would be followed at the first General Chapter for the election to offices: first, the "virgins", then the "matrons", and then would come a note about not being ready to elect the "four men". 28 Chosen by vote to be "teachers and guides in the way of the spiritual life", 29 charged with visiting their

<sup>27</sup> Regola 1582, p.29; and infra, Pt.III, Ch.II.

Regola, Chapter on Confession.
 Ibid., Chapter on Obedience.

The "Concessio" is published in the appendix to the Regola of Turlino, D2.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> Regola, Chapter on Government.

"daughters" quite frequently in order to help them spiritually and materially, the four virgins are invested with a real governmental authority and also that of spiritual guidance.

Thus it is not accurate to reduce their role to that of "virgin-mistresses", as is found sometimes in certain Merician literature, in other words to a purely formative role, submitting to the authority of the "matrons" in almost everything. Actually, recourse will have to be made to the "matrons" only in cases of emergency: "For you should avoid as far as you can giving trouble and concern to the lady-governors".<sup>30</sup>

We have taken this last quotation from the *Ricordi* addressed to the "colonelle", because this was the title which the virgins of the government would very soon assume, and it was on their shoulders that the immediate responsibility vis-à-vis the maidens of the Company would fall. Noteworthy is the firmness with which Angela adds, still in the 4th Counsel: "But if you cannot provide for them yourselves, then have recourse to the lady-governors, explain to them promptly and without hesitation the needs of your flock. And if you see that they are slow to help, then insist, even to the point of being importunate and trouble-some in my name. For if ever, through your fault and negligence, one of those in your charge were to be lost, God would ask you to render strict account of it on the Day of Judgment".

It is true that Angela begins the 3rd Counsel with the warning: "Be obedient to the lady-governors whom I am leaving behind in my place, because that is right ...". But she then adds: "If it should happen that you have some just cause to disagree with them or reproach them, do so with tact and respect.... But be sure that where you know for certain that there is danger to the spiritual well-being and virtue of your daughters, you must on no account consent to it, nor tolerate it, nor be prevented from acting for any reason whatsoever. But always and in all things act wisely and with discernment".

The first and immediate responsibility of the members of the Company thus falls on the "four virgins" of the government. Theirs is an ordinary authority, to be exercised in the day-to-day matters, without any intermediaries, except in particularly difficult cases, when they will have to turn to that special type of major superior, the "matrons".

At this point it is of interest to bring out the meaning of the expression "superior-superiors" in the three Merician Writings. Angela uses it nine times: six times to indicate, in a general way, the "superiors of the house", that is, parents, tutors, persons in whose service the virgins of

<sup>30</sup> Ricordi, 4th Counsel.

the Company are engaged; twice, when referring to the role of authority exercised by the "colonelle"; once, to point out, in Pope St Gregory, the model – for the "colonelle" – of an authority exercised in a spirit of service and of humility. The term "superior" is never used by Angela with regard to the "matrons".

The virgins of the government will exercise their office by being present to their "daughters", with both affection and vigilance, taking care to know not only their behaviour, but their spiritual and temporal needs, and to provide for these "to the best of your ability".<sup>31</sup> At the same time they must be a model for them, "an example and a mirror".<sup>32</sup>

Understood in this way, the office of superior is both authority and formation, maternity and right of intervention, but exercised in such a way that the vigilance made necessary by circumstances must not be felt as a weight by the virgins, but as an act of love.

In the last years of her life, Angela herself made a few changes in the structure represented by the "four virgins". Let us try and reconstruct the stages of this evolution.

At the beginning, the "four virgins" exercised their mandate over "all their other sisters who are in the city"; but then with time and with the expansion of the Company, Angela must have found herself faced with the necessity of making their task lighter by allocating them to sectors of the city. This can be gathered from the expression, "colonelli", which she herself used and which then became part of the Company's own vocabulary. It was, perhaps, a reminiscence of the language and structures of her native Desenzano, where this word was used to designate both the administrative divisions of the town and the persons who were in charge of them. The change of expression, from "virgins" to "colonelle", leads us to this conclusion.

That this transformation took place later is attested by Cozzano in his *Dichiarazione della Bolla* <sup>33</sup> when, going through the chief stages by which the structures became fixed, he relates that the Foundress "made the principal mother; then she made the 'colonelle'; thirdly, she created the protectors.... After the death of the Foundress, the office of 'arcicolonella' was also made ...". And then Cozzano adds that there is the possibility of other functions: "one can make novice-mistresses, procurators ...".

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 4th Counsel.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 6th Counsel.

<sup>33</sup> D24, [f.979v].

Thus it can be assumed that, given the increase in the number of members of the Company (one hundred and fifty at the time of Angela's death),<sup>34</sup> and the fact that they were living in different parts of the town, it was found necessary to make some kind of division, a subdivision, precisely, into "colonelli", each with a person in charge.

There is further proof that this change in the territorial areas of authority took place while Angela was still alive: in the 5th Legacy of the Testamento, Angela recommends to the matrons not to hesitate to remove from the Company anyone who is not willing to obey or who has fallen into some serious failing. But the day when, fully repentant, she asks to be allowed to return to the Company, she must be taken back, provided, however, that she asks pardon of all the matrons and also "of her colonello". This proves that already each of the virgins depended on one immediate superior, her "colonella".

If one compares the tasks of the "four virgins" as they are given in the Regola with the duties of the "colonelle" outlined in the Ricordi, it is easy to see how they coincide. Thus it seems reasonable to conclude that what is involved here is only an evolution in the terminology and a modification with regard to the area of their authority, but there is no change in the function of the "virgins" who have become "colonelle". And even more so, as neither the Ricordi nor the Testamento mentions the existence of any other category of persons who had a role in the government.

The expression "colonelle", however, which replaces "de facto" the word "virgins" with reference to the members of the government, has not been substituted for "virgins" in the text of the manuscript Regola of the Trivulzian codex, nor in Turlino's printed edition, out of respect, perhaps, for the original wording which had been approved by Lorenzo Muzio. And so "de jure", it is the expression "virgins" which has the

legal value.

When, on 23 November 1555, the notary Zanetti had to draw up a deed for an institutional act carried out by Ginevra Luzzago and the members of the Company who had remained loyal to her, of necessity he would use the vocabulary which was in force in the Regola, the constitutional charter of the Company. Thus, he would write: "Congregata et more solito convocata Confraternitate, Societate et Congegatione matronarum, virginum et puellarum sub invocatione Sanctae Ursulae in civitate Brixiae instituta, errecta, et fundata per bonae memoriae Matrem Sororem Angelam Tertii Ordinis Sancti Francisci, successivisque tempo-

<sup>34</sup> BELLINTANI, Vita, op. cit., ms.B.VI.30, f.[18r].

ribus et per reverendissimum Episcopum Brixiensem seu eius reverendum vicarium, et per litteras apostolicas confirmata ...".<sup>35</sup> The threefold distinction is clear in this quotation: "matrone", the widow ladygovernors; "vergini", to indicate the "colonelle"; and "puellae" for the

virgin members of the Company.

The first part of this quotation, which repeats the original formula "matrons" and "virgins" to indicate the two categories of persons in authority, confirms the identity of the virgin-colonelle which we have set out. And it is as to virgins bound to Christ and at the same time invested with authority, that Angela addresses her special instructions, suggesting to them norms of government prompted by psychological finesse and inspired by a very elevated spirituality. Speaking to them, she employs different expressions from the ones she uses in the Legacies to the matrons; here she touches on the essential aspects of the life of consecration of the virgins, using a language of the initiated, the meaning and richness of which would escape the matrons, still caught up in all their family and social commitments. They are the expressions of one who knows she can open her heart to someone who is sharing the same existential experience.

There is proof of this in some passages from the 5th Counsel. Here is found the teaching which the "colonelle" must give, and which is not limited to the rules of exterior behaviour, but reaches down to the depths of the spirit: "They should give honour to Jesus Christ to whom they have promised their virginity and their whole being. They should place their hope and love in God alone and not in any living creature.... Further, tell them ... that I am constantly among them with my Lover, or rather, the Lover of each one of us ... They should have Jesus Christ

for their only treasure ...".36

The first "four virgins" of the government, elected 18 March 1537 immediately after the "Madre" and before the "matrons", were: "Barbara de Monteclaro, Margarita de Brixia, Agnes ancilla D. Ursulae de Gavardo, et Clara que habitat in domo ser Pauli de Angulo civis et habitatoris Brixiae". The only indisputable information which we possess about them is that they were "virgines de dicta societate", as is attested in the notarial act, and not widows.

Given the absence of any information about their civil status, it was not possible for us to identify them. We are giving the little information

<sup>35</sup> D28.

<sup>36</sup> Ricordi, 5th Counsel.

<sup>37</sup> D6

we do possess: at that particular time Barbara seems to have been the only one with this name; in a notarial act of 23 November 1555, a certain Barbara Valtorta is listed as a member of the group of Ginevra Luzzago. Margherita, on the other hand, is a name which recurs frequently. In the 1558 list of members, there is still an Agnese who "sta in casa di Gavardi"; even though twenty years have elapsed, this could be the same

"Agnes ancilla dominae Ursulae de Gavardo", elected in 1537.

As for Clara, who lived in the house of Paolo da Angolo (Angolo is a village in the upper Valcamonica), we have only the flimsiest of threads which could link her to "Clara ed Isabetta figlie del fu Beltrame Pachieri", who appear in three notarial acts of 1555 and 1556.39 In the one of 23 November 1555, they are together with Barbara Valtorta; in the others the two sisters are mentioned in first place immediately after the mother general, Ginevra Luzzago. The possibility of such a link could be based on the fact that, at the first General Chapter in 1537, among those voting by proxy, one finds precisely an "Isabetta fu Beltrame, fachere da Martinengo". "Fachere" could be a writing or copying error for "Pachere" or "Pachieri". The "Clara" elected among the four virgins of the government could well have been her sister. If this is so, the father's place of origin, "da Martinengo", would perhaps enable us also to put an end to the uncertainty concerning identification of the "Chiara da Martinengo" who, according to Cozzano and Faino, 40 was one of the first daughters of Angela Merici.

Between 1537 and 1540, the number of the "matrons" was increased from five to eight, excluding the "madre principale", as is testified by the the dedication to the *Testamento*. Would the number of the "colonelle" also have been changed? We know nothing about this. Certainly at least a few changes must have been made, as we find a "colonella", "la Pizza", whose existence is clearly documented, although she did not feature among the group of four already mentioned.

In actual fact, from the Libro delle Defunte, which existed at that time but has been since lost, the Atti dei Processi 41 report the entry of the first member of the Company to die: "Prima morite una fiola de una colonela dita la Piza, stava a Sta Afra et nome iera Marta". Who this "colonella" surnamed "la Pizza" was, we do not know; nor were we able to track down the above-mentioned Marta who was living in the vicinity of St Afra. Unless it was referring to that "Marta neptis Antonii de Pezis", list-

38 SLG, f.100v.

<sup>41</sup> APC. Vat. 341, f.946v.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> D28, D29; and the act of 30 November 1555, in ASB, notaio Girolamo Zanetti, file 1694.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. supra, Pt.II, Ch.VII, 3.a.

ed among the members who voted in 1537.<sup>42</sup> Her mother, la Pizza, could have been a sister of Antonio. We are faced here, anyway, with a "colonella" who was a widow and the mother of one of the maidens of the Company. Failing to find a virgin with the necessary gifts for exercising the office of district superior, Angela could have found herself obliged, therefore, to make such a choice.

No documentation exists which contains the lists of the members of the Company, together with the "colonelle" in charge, between 1545 (date of the act of election of the procurators and administrators)<sup>43</sup> and

1555 (act of election of Veronica Buzzi).44

The minutes of Veronica Buzzi's election contain the list of matrons and virgins – and what is of special interest to us at this point – the names of the "colonelle", together with the name of the particular area for which they were responsible; it deals, however, with that part of the Company which had taken sides against the group legitimately governed by Ginevra Luzzago. These "colonelle" were: Santa, colonella of S. Giovanni; Angela da Serli, colonella of S. Nazaro; Maria da Leno, colonella of S. Faustino; Margarita [Rema], colonella of S. Afra; Andreana [da Rumano], colonella of the Mercato Nuovo; Peregrina, colonella of the Duomo. At this particular time the "colonelli" of Veronica Buzzi's party had already become six. The fact that in the document there is no mention of any other government charges apart from the mother general, the "matrons" and the above-mentioned "colonelle", is a further confirmation of the view we have expressed, namely that the "virgins" in charge had definitely taken over the title of "colonelle".

We have said "the virgins in charge", but these same minutes of 1555 give us a second case of a "colonella-madre": Peregrina, who also votes on behalf of her daughter Cecilia. The Secondo Libro Generale provides us with a third example on f.101v: recorded here is an "Angela de Maria collonella", received into the Company on 25 November 1561. We did not find any further examples of "colonelle-madri".

It is true that the 1558 list of members <sup>46</sup> – the Company was then reunited – contains the name of a Maria di Leno, colonella of S. Faustino, with her daughter Scholastica and her sister Lucrezia. But we have already pointed out in the previous chapter that this is a mistake. Actually, in the minutes of Veronica Buzzi's election, a notarial act copied

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>42</sup> D6.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup> D27.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>44</sup> D26.

<sup>45</sup> SLG, f.54.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., f.100v.

into the Secondo Libro Generale, it is written: "Maria da Leno colonella di Santo Faustino, et D. Scholastica, et D. Lucretia tutte trei sorelle". And already in 1545 this had happened, when all three had been put down as sisters in the notarial act: "Maria, Scolastica et Lucretia sorores, filie magistri Bertolini de Garginis". At Angela's election, on the other hand, among the virgins there was only "Maria filia magistri Bertolini de Leno".

When Isabetta Prato took over the highest office in 1572, she would want to introduce new structures; the figure of the "colonella", originally called to be "virgin", "mistress", "guide", "example", "mirror" of the virgins of the Company, would be divided into two. Thus, for each "colonello" or administrative unit, there would be appointed, in addition to a "matron", "one of the most capable of the virgins of the aforesaid 'colonello', who will be called mistress because she will have to guide the said virgins along the path of the spiritual life", and to this would be added "one of the most mature virgins, or a respected widow who will be called 'colonella'". <sup>50</sup>

At first sight this may seem a return to Angela's original idea regarding the "virgins of the government"; in reality, though, it was paving the way for the introduction of a new figure, that of a person, virgin or widow, with rather vague and confused duties, who kept only the name of "colonella", and was a member of the government, but without any authority. The Rule of 1582, signed by Charles Borromeo, would reduce her to the role of "avvisatrice", still retaining for her, incomprehensibly, those *Ricordi* (rearranged though) which Angela had meant for the virgins who were the local superiors of the Company.

# b) The "matrons"

The office of the "matrons" in the government, in other words, widows who belonged to the Brescian aristocracy, seems to be more of a representative and administrative kind, charged as they are with the responsibility of defending the inner structure of the Company and of inserting it into the socio-ecclesial framework of the city.

Given the novelty of the form of life of the Company, it was neces-

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., f.54; D26.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>48</sup> D27.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>49</sup> D6.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>50</sup> SLG, f.45. "... una delle più sufficienti virgini dil detto collonello, et si chiamasse maestra, per haver da guidar dette virgini nella via et vita spirituale". "... una vergine delle più mature, overo una vedova da bene, la quale se dimandasse collonella".

sary that such a function be entrusted to persons who knew how to assert themselves and also to stand up to public opinion with the strength of their prestige, while the fact that they were widows ensured that they had the necessary freedom of action. The class to which they belonged put them in a position to protect the Company and its interests thanks, in particular, to their own social contacts.

The duties assigned to the "matrons" with regard to the maidens are connected with discipline in the broad sense of the word, and not with formation, and are concerned above all with their exterior behav-

iour and the image that they might give of the Company.

Angela addresses the "matrons" with respect, as "honoured sisters and mothers"; <sup>51</sup> she frequently appeals to the spiritual motherhood which is theirs, making reference to the physical motherhood experienced by some of them. They must watch over the virgins as if they were their own daughters, <sup>52</sup> with the heartfelt charity that is shown "by human mothers". <sup>53</sup> They must keep a careful eye on their behaviour so that they will be worthy of their Spouse Jesus, with as much trouble and care as natural mothers put into preparing and making their daughters beautiful for a noble husband; they must be aware, indeed, of the dignity that is theirs from the fact that they are, as it were, "mothers-in-law of the Son of God". <sup>54</sup> Such a language as this must have sounded familiar to their ears.

Angela's insistence on their mission of spiritual motherhood towards their "figlioline" seems to reveal a certain anxiety on her part about their ability to understand and to adjust to their role. Perhaps it is this fear which makes her, in the Testament, take time to exalt the royal dignity of their daughters which will reflect back on the matrons, "mothers of such a noble family", 55 and which will open to them the doors of eternal beatitude: "And there where the daughters are, the mothers also will be found. Be consoled, and do not doubt; we want to see you in heaven in our midst ...". 56

The "matrons" have experience in managing material goods. It is to them that Angela recommends a wise use of any goods that may come to the Company, so that they may be used "for the good and the development of the Company". This is the only time when Angela expresses her-

<sup>51</sup> Testamento, [Prologue].

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

Ibid., 2nd Legacy.Ibid., 4th Legacy.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. [Prologue].

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>56</sup> Ibid., Last Legacy.

self with a "non voglio": "On this matter I do not want you to seek outside advice. Decide just among yourselves in the way that charity and the Holy Spirit will enlighten and inspire you".<sup>57</sup>

It is to them that Angela entrusts, as it were, the Rule, so that it may be followed by the maidens "with the utmost diligence",<sup>58</sup> dictating the rules of a sound pedagogy, inspired by confidence in the resources of each one, but prudently alert to the dangers lying in wait for them. In spite of their involvement in the government, none of the notarial acts in our possession shows that the matrons had the right to vote in the plenary sessions of the Company.

But who were these "matrons" to whom Angela offers an opportunity to share in the work of the government of the Company? We managed to collect together some interesting details about them and we are going to present them in the order followed by Angela when she dedicates her Testament "to the Countess, Lady Lucrezia, principal ladygovernor of the Company of St Ursula; and to the other lady-governors and mothers, the noble Ladies ...".<sup>59</sup>

- Contessa Madonna Lucrezia:

Principal lady-governor of the Company of St Ursula, Lucrezia Cattani, who was not from a noble family, had married Count Ettore, lord of Lodrone and imperial vassal. On the strength of this last title, the Count was not obliged to return the "polizza d'estimo", and this made it difficult for us to find out any useful information about the births, marriages and deaths of the members of the family.

We know, however, that Ettore Lodrone – the first in the family to bear this name – had died in 1525, and that his son Pietro, in 1522, had

won renown fighting under Charles V against the French.

Bartolomeo Corsetto, who in 1683 wrote about the glories of the Lodrone family, from which we have taken the last two pieces of information, devotes a whole paragraph to Lucrezia, one of the two Lodrone women whom he has deemed worthy of such a honour: "Verum sicut praefatis proceribus summa in armis peritia, et in rebus agendis singularis non defuit prudentia, sic et in faeminis non impar religionis pietas, morum innocentia, et vitae sanctitas fuit. Nam praeter non paucas, quae monachalem vitam suscepere, inter alias maxime commendatur comitissa Lucretia Lodrona, quae anno a Christo nato, septimo et trigesimo supra

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 9th Legacy.

Ibid., Last Legacy.Ibid. [Prologue].

millesimum et quingentesimum quo Angela e Decentiani oppido in Riperia Benacensi celebri, Societatis Virginum Sanctarum Ursulae etc. Brixiae in nobili urbe fundamenta iecit, prima et principalis inter alias matronas ab ipsa ipsius Confraternitatis constituta fuit gubernatrix et patrona, et in morte in eius locum subrogata..., cuius memoria in benedictione est".60

Lucrezia had been elected in 1537, after the election of Angela and that of the virgins of the government, first in rank among the five matrons voted for by the Company. She had then succeeded Angela, not by election, but by designation of the "Madre" herself, as is recorded in the *Secondo Libro Generale*: "The reverend Madre Sor Angela of blessed memory, foundress of the Company, when she had arrived at the end of her life, at the earnest entreaty of her spiritual daughters, chose to replace her as mother of the Company, the Lady Countess Lucretia di Lodrone, left a widow by the late Count Hectore ...".61 The SLG, however, does not quote any other source except the *Testamento*.

But we found a confirmation of this choice in the notarial act of 22 February 1545,62 drawn up by the notary Giovan Maria Maffetti, for the

election of procurators and administrators.

In virtue of the liberty of action and of the power of jurisdiction conferred on her by Angela herself and confirmed by the Company, Countess Lodrone had called all the virgins together in order to proceed to these nominations. The document states: "Convocatis et congregatis... omnibus et singulis verginibus... de mandato et comissione Magnifice comitisse... domine ministre, thesaurarie et priorisse dicte Societatis, vigore libertatis et baylie sibi date et atribute per prefatam quondam dominam Sur Angelam, et deinde confirmate per dictam Societatem, ut in Capitulario sive privilegiis dicte Societatis dicitur apparere...".

We will meet Countess Lodrone again further on, exercising her powers to the full, when we study the evolution of the Company.

p.34.

61 SLG, f.53v. "La veneranda Madre Sor Angela di beata memoria, fondatrice della Compagnia, mentre fosse ridotta al fine di sua vita così pregata dalle sue figliole spirituali ellisse in suo luogo per madre della Compagnia la signora contessa Lucretia di Lodrone relicta quondam signor conte

Hectore...".

62 D27.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>60</sup> BARTHOLOMAEUS CORSETTUS, Lodronii Leonis vetustatis, ac virtutis inclitae monimenta Nuper a Bartholomaeo Corsetto Presbytero Benacensi, Parochialis S. Petri Liani Praeposito, ac Vicario Foraneo. In lucem edita cum duplici Indice: Altero Auctorum et Operum, ex quibus sunt collecta; Altero vero rerum memorabilium. Illustrissimo et Reverendissimo D.D. Carolo Antonio Lucciago I.V.D. Prothonot. Apostolico, Archidiacono Canonico Ecclesiae Cathedralis Brixiae, et in eodem Episcopatu Vicario Generali Dicata. Brixiae, 1683. Apud Dominicum Grummum. At the BQ, SB.E.II.34, p.34.

- Madonna Genepra di Luciagi:

Zenevra or Ginevra Riva (or Ripa), was born in 1502. In the 1517 tax-return<sup>63</sup>, she appears in the "polizza d'estimo" of her husband, Alessandro Luzzago. He is 29 years old, and she is 15; they do not yet have any children. In the following tax-declaration, carried out in 1534, Ginevra, only 31 years old, is already a widow, with seven children. In her "polizza d'estimo", as was the custom, the two sons, Tomaso aged 7 years and Hieronymo aged 6, are declared first, and then come the five daughters, all older than the boys. Three are even already more than twelve years old, in other words, of marriageable age. There is a substantial list of properties and revenues. Ginevra also has in the house three maid-servants and a legal administrator for the goods of the children still under-age.

In 1547, Ginevra is included in the "polizza d'estimo" of her sons, Tomaso and Hieronymo. Hieronymo is married to Paola Peschiera<sup>64</sup>, aged 18 years; they are the parents of the future Venerable Alessandro

Luzzago.

When writing the life of Alessandro, Ottavio Hermanni, referring to the conversion of his father Girolamo, would give this testimony about Ginevra: "His conversion is commonly attributed, after God, to the holiness of his mother, who was a noble lady of the Ripa family, called by the name of Lady Ginevra. Over and above the mortifications of the body, fasts and other penances, to which she devoted herself continually out of love of God, she was also, out of the abundant generosity of her heart, the very close companion and assistant of Blessed Angela from Desenzano in the foundation of the very noble Company of the Virgins of St Ursula for which, as one can see from the processes this Company was involved in on a number of occasions, she paid out large sums of money".65

Ginevra must have been very young when she entered the Merician circle, if in 1537, when she was only 34-35 years old, she had already

64 Homonym of a maiden of the Company.

<sup>63</sup> PE, n.77.

<sup>65</sup> OTTAVIO HERMANNI, Vita di Alessandro Luzago Gentil'huomo Bresciano. Scritta la seconda volta e accresciuta di molte aggionte. Brescia, per Francesco Comincini, 1622, pp.10-11. "La conversione di lui comunemente si attribuisce, dopo Dio, alla santità della madre, quale fu una gentil donna di casa Ripa chiamata per nome signora Ginevra; questa, oltre alle mortificationi del corpo ne i digiuni et altre fatiche (nelle quali continuamente per amore di Dio si occupava), fu ancora, per l'abondanza grande dello spirito, compagna principalissima et coadiutrice della Beata Angela da Desenzano nella fondatione della nobilissima Compagnia delle Vergini di Sant'Orsola; nella quale, come si può vedere da processi d'essa Compagnia per altre occasioni formati, impiegò etiandio molta somma de dinari".

been elected matron.<sup>66</sup> We will find her again later, not only as the head of the group opposing the orders of Lucrezia Lodrone, but also in the

role of mother general.

Very faithful to the Foundress, very faithful to the Company, as we have already had occasion to note,<sup>67</sup> she would give evidence of this attachment of hers in her will:<sup>68</sup> she would ask to be buried in St Afra; she would bequeath a sum of money to the Canons of this church so that a priest there could read the Rule to the virgins of the Company and administer the sacraments to them; and so that each year, on 27 January, a solemn mass could be celebrated there, together with the divine office, for the repose of her soul. If the day should come when there were no more virgins of St Ursula, then the Canons, on All Souls' Day, were to have two white wax candles lit on the tomb of the defunct Sister Angela (perhaps to perpetuate a practice which had already become traditional in the Company).

In addition, Ginevra bequeathed in usufruct to her daughter Paola, married to Ludovico Soraga, a house situated in Brescia, in the district of the fountain of the Dulciani, so that some maidens of the Company could be lodged there while waiting to find a settled accommodation, providing they were faithful in following the Rule and in receiving the

sacraments in the church of St Afra.

Finally, she would forgive the Company – with the binding force of a will – all the debts they had accumulated toward her owing to the expenses incurred either through litigations or for other reasons, on condition though that the members continued to frequent the church of St Afra.

This insistence of hers on binding the virgins of the Company to the church in which the remains of the Foundress reposed was meant as both a warning and a desire on her part that they should continue along the path traced out for them by their "Madre".

- Madonna Maria di Avogadri:

We only know that she was the widow of a certain Antonio, as this is given in the notarial act of 1537, when she was elected matron. She belonged to Ginevra Luzzago's circle of friends,<sup>69</sup> and it is perhaps for

<sup>66</sup> D6.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. supra, Pt.II, Ch.VI, 3.b.

<sup>8</sup> D32

<sup>69</sup> FRANCESCO GRASSO CAPRIOLI, Camillo Tarello, Agostino Gallo, Giacomo Chizzola e l'Accademia di Rezzato, in "Rivista di Storia dell'Agricoltura", 1982, n.2, p.65.16.

this reason that she does not appear to have joined the separatist initia-

tive sponsored by Lucrezia Lodrone.70

We would like, however, to mention the "polizza d'estimo" of a certain Pietro Avogadro son of the late Antonio, who in 1568 was 50 years old and possessed much property. He had five daughters, two of whom were religious at the monastery of the Peace, and the other three were still unmarried. About one of these he wrote: "It is true that Constantia does not seem to want to marry". In actual fact, a Costanza Avogadro had been accepted into the Company of St Ursula on 25 November 1561. Costanza, daughter of Pietro, Antonio's son, could have been the grand-daughter of Maria Avogadro.

#### - Madonna Veronica di Bucci:

When Doctor Camillo Buzzi compiled the declaration form for his income in 1534,<sup>72</sup> he was already 61 years old and his wife Veronica was only 30. Camillo had married her after the death of his first wife, Antonia. He and Veronica now have a little girl of 8 years who, in 1545, will already be a member of the Company.<sup>73</sup> In the house they also have "un' altra putta tolta da levar per massara della carità, de anni 10", in other words an orphan, or a foundling, being brought up for domestic service. In 1540, when Veronica is listed among the matrons to whom the *Testamento* is dedicated, she will already be a widow at only 36 years. She will be elected mother of the Company in 1555.<sup>74</sup> At the time of the reunification of the Company, she will yield her place to Bianca Porcellaga, but will resume the office on 6 February 1569 and will hold it until her death in 1572.<sup>75</sup>

#### - Madonna Orsolina di Gavardi:

She is also called Ursina, Orsola, Orsina. She was not one of the youngest, as she must have been born about 1494. In 1534, when only 40, she had already been left a widow by Girolamo, with three children to bring up: Aloysio, Margarita, Lucia, aged respectively 18, 11 and 7 years. She was wealthy from many properties and had many creditors. In her house she kept a tutor, a man-servant, two maid-servants and a valet. She was living in the San Barnaba district. To Orsolina had been elected

<sup>71</sup> PE, n.8, 1568; SLG, f.101v.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>70</sup> SLG, f.35.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>72</sup> PE, Camillo di Buzi doctor collegiato, 1517, n.253; PE, 1534 and 1565, n.29.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>73</sup> D27.

<sup>74</sup> SLG, f.54v; D26.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., f.40.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>76</sup> PE di Aloysio Gavardo, n.65, 1534.

for the first time on 18 March 1537; later she had sided with the matrons who were in favour of adopting the cincture and of inscribing in the "libro bollato" the names of those who had agreed to wear it.<sup>77</sup>

In 1553, she was short-listed with Veronica Buzzi for the highest

office, but Veronica received the majority of the votes.<sup>78</sup>

#### - Madonna Giovanna di Monti:

She seems to have been the oldest of the matrons. In the tax-declaration of 1517 <sup>79</sup> Giovanna, or Zoana, is included in the "polizza d'estimo" of her husband Zoan Batista fu Cristoforo de Monte (a branch of the Montis of the Corte). The couple have seven children, with ages ranging from 15 years to 15 months; they live in the parish of S. Alessandro, and they have living in the house a priest who serves as a tutor, and also a wet-nurse and two maid-servants. Giovanna's age is not given. Her properties are declared in her husband's "polizza d'estimo", but separately.

She appears in her sons' "polizza d'estimo" in 1534; she is a widow; her goods are included in it, but apart from theirs. She no longer appears in the 1548 tax-declarations, and there is no further mention of her

in the Secondo Libro Generale.

#### - Madonna Isabetta da Prato:

We have already spoken about her on a number of occasions.<sup>80</sup> Here we will just record that she was among those who supported the "libro bollato".<sup>81</sup> In 1555, she was short-listed with Veronica Buzzi in the election for the mother general, and it was the latter who received the majority of votes.<sup>82</sup> Elected to the highest office in 1572,<sup>83</sup> she filled this position until her death in 1580.<sup>84</sup>

# - Madonna Lionella di Pedeciocchi:

In 1534, her husband, Zombaptista, together with his brothers, the "fratelli di Pedezochi", filled in one joint tax-declaration.<sup>85</sup> He was then 50 years old, Lionella 30. In June 1537, Nassino makes a note in his

<sup>77</sup> SLG, f.35.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., f.54v.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>79</sup> PE, n.90.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. supra, Pt.II, Ch.III, g.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. SLG, f.35.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., f.54v.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., f.56.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., f.40.

<sup>85</sup> PE, n.102.

diary about the death of Giovan Battista. The 1548 "polizza d'estimo" gives no indication as to whether there were any children. From the 1568 one, we learn that she was still alive.

Within the circle of the Company, in 1546 she had supported the introduction of the "libro bollato"; <sup>87</sup> in 1555 she was short-listed with Orsina Gavardo, Isabetta Prato and Veronica Buzzi; it was Veronica who, receiving the most votes, had been elected mother general. <sup>88</sup>

#### - Madonna Caterina di Mei:

Or Meya. If the "polizza d'estimo" which we found <sup>89</sup> does refer to her, in 1534 she was only 29 years old, and her husband Bernardino was 28; the couple had no children. One gathers that she was already a widow in 1540 from the fact that she is one of those named in the dedication to Angela's *Testamento*. In 1546, she had given her support to the setting up of the Company's "libro bollato", <sup>90</sup> but after that we do not find her again.

To these nine "matrons" to whom Angela addressed her *Testament*, it is fitting to add a tenth, who had been elected in 1537 as "matrona supranumeraria", 91 but who is not to be found in any later document:

Lucrezia Luzzago:

Born Avogadro-Ferrazzi, she had married Ercole Luzzago. Angela's election act, in which the election of Lucrezia is also recorded, calls her the widow of Paolo Luzzago. In the 1517 "polizza d'estimo" filled in by her, she says that she is already a widow, with four children the last of whom, Zoan, is only three years old.

In 1534, Lucrezia is included in the tax-declaration of her sons Galeazzo and Zoan; at that time she was 46 years old. In addition to three men-servants, there were also three maid-servants in the house. One of these, Angela, was a member of the Company of St Ursula.<sup>94</sup>

What may come as a surprise, when one considers as a whole all this

<sup>86</sup> NASSINO, Registro, op. cit., f.240r.

<sup>87</sup> SLG, f.35.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., f.54r-v.

<sup>89</sup> PE, n.87.

<sup>90</sup> SLG, f.35.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>91</sup> D6.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> PE, n.77.

<sup>94</sup> D6.

information about the noble ladies chosen by Angela, is the young age of the majority of them. By involving them in the government of the maidens of the Company – admittedly with mostly disciplinary and administrative duties – Angela was opening up new fields of activity for their capacity of self-giving, and was offering them, with spiritual motherhood, a new way of realising to the full their femininity.

# c) The "men"

Experience, sound realism and concrete common sense prompted Angela to bring in as associates of the virgins and matrons, in the exercise of government, "four men who are mature and upright ... and the four men will act as agents and fathers in the day-to-day needs of the Company". Their help is to be sought in difficult cases, whenever the maidens find themselves prevented, by their families or by others, from carrying out their duties, or when they find themselves being defrauded of the wages due to them, and the four virgins of the government and the matrons together cannot cope with the situation. The maidens, in their turn, must obey "the governors ... of the Company", obviously within the terms of their office. He wages the company of the company within the terms of their office.

It is clear that it must have been a question here, as for the matrons, of persons with not only a well known reputation for moral rectitude, but also the prestige of the kind of social position which offered them a certain facility of contacts. But it is also evident that their authority was confined to questions of a purely temporal nature.

When the first elections for the offices to be carried out in the Company took place on 18 March 1537, 77 the notary wrote in the minutes: "Circa vero provisionem dictorum quatuor hominum maturorum nundum facta fuit electio per dictam societatem, quia nundum provisum fuit de eis".

Thus, Angela was still a little uncertain: over which persons to choose? or over which specific duties to allocate to them exactly? or perhaps a mixture of the two? It seems to us that this is what can be deduced from the passage of Cozzano already quoted à propos the "colonelle": Angela "made the principal mother; then she made the 'colonelle'; thirdly, she created the gentlemen-protectors, and before this she made the chancellor who wrote the Rule and everything pertaining to it and made him write many other things, and she made him protector

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., Chapter on Obedience.

97 D6.

<sup>95</sup> Regola, Chapter on Government.

of this Company in order to defend the Company ... novice-mistresses, procurators can also be made ...".98

Angela herself, who from the very beginning – in the Rule – had established the four men as "agents and fathers", must later have realised the advisability of defining their duties. Some later documents help us to understand this, as they show us the stages of evolution this structure of the four men underwent, and how the Foundress herself might already have divided their function by making a distinction between the role of the "agents" and that of the "protectors". The role of the former retained an ordinary character; that of the "protectors", on the other hand, would become one of counsel and, where necessary, of qualified intervention. It might be difficult for one person to hold two such different offices; hence the advisability of two different categories of persons. Angela, however, made an exception for Cozzano: he was not of noble birth, but even so, she made him, as he himself affirms, "protector of the Company".99

In the Regola, Angela used the term "governors" in the chapter on obedience, as we have just seen, and again in the chapter on the admission of young women into the Company. These maidens, in fact, had to let their parents know themselves about their desire to enter; but after this, it was the "lady-governors and governors" who, in their turn, had to discuss the matter with the family in order to avoid any misunderstandings or ambiguity. Moreover this measure gave a certain official character and a greater weight to the step the young person was taking, since the government and the family were involved together, on equal

grounds, in examining and approving her choice.

The petition addressed to Paul III to obtain approval for the Rule must have come from the "governors and lady-governors", expressed precisely in this particular way. Taking up, in fact, the expressions used in the petition, as is the custom in the first part of a Bull, the writer repeats them: "pro parte dilectorum filiorum modernorum gubernatorum et gubernatricum Confraternitatis virginum, sub invocatione sancte Ursule in civitate Brixiensi canonice institute...". <sup>100</sup>

In the actual carrying out of their specific functions, the two categories of agents and protectors became more and more separate. The Secondo Libro Generale, making up the lists a posteriori, allocates separate

" Ibid

<sup>98</sup> Dichiarazione della Bolla, D24 [f.979v].

<sup>100</sup> Paul III's Bull "Regimini Universalis Ecclesiae"; D18.

pages for "Li Magnifici signori Governatori della Compagnia" and "Li Agenti della Compagnia". 101

And yet we found nothing in any document about these men being

present in the years immediately following Angela's death.

To find a document connected with the appointment of the "men", we have to wait for the notarial act of 23 November 1555, from which we have already quoted several times. <sup>102</sup> It is concerned precisely with the election of honest men, charged with defending the rights of the Company. And then the four men are elected: Gabriele Cozzano, whom the Foundress had personally chosen as secretary, then Giulio Balteo and Giovita Boni, all three of them notaries, and Girolamo Girardetti fu Bernardino. During the same session, the assembly also elected three "protectors" belonging to the Brescian nobility: "il magnifico signore Giovan Maria Peschiera, il magnifico cavaliere Marc'Antonio Mauri et il magnifico signore Girolamo Luzzago". The first-named was Girolamo Luzzago's father-in-law.

The document states: "considerantes sibi et Congregationi ipsi opportunum et necessarium, ac expediens iuxta eius regulam ad occurrentes necessitates de quorum probis hominibus providere prottectoresque ipsius idoneos, pro conservatione Confraternitatis et Societatis praedictae et iurium suorum manutentione habere, unanimiter et concorditer... faciunt, constituunt, eligunt et deputant earum et dictae Confraternitatis, iuxtaque eius regulam praedictam, procuratores, agentes, actores et deffensores et patres ad occurrentes necessitates praedictum dominum Gabrielem de Cocialibus etiam secundum dictae fundatricis intentionem scribam, et dominum Julium Baltheum, notarios, cives et habitatores Brixiae, praesentes et onus praedictum in se sponte suscipientes, nec non et dominum Jovitam de Bonis notarium, et dominum Hieronimum de Girardettis quondam domini Bernardini, pariter cives et habitatores Brixiae... prottettores autem suos eligerunt et eligunt, ac deputaverunt et deputant magnificum dominum Johannem Mariam de Pischeriis, magnificum Equitem dominum Marcum Antonium de Mauris et magnificum dominum Hieronimum de Luzagis".

On 18 September 1556, Gabriele Cozzano had his office confirmed; in addition, the group of voters, presided over by Ginevra Luzzago, appointed and set him up as "verum nuntium missum et legitimum procuratorem ac syndicum generalem et specialem". This notarial act seems to

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>101</sup> SLG. on ff.48 and 50 respectively. On f.48, the title "Governatori" has been crossed out and replaced by that of "Protettori".
<sup>102</sup> D28.

make him, in every respect, the plenipotentiary defender of the Company of St Ursula.<sup>103</sup>

In 1572, after the Company had already been reunited for a number of years, a group of three governesses (the "madonna", the "maestra" and the "colonella") was instituted for each of the seven "colonelli" (districts). At the same time, attention was drawn to the necessity of electing "four men, mature and of irreproachable conduct, who will be called agents. In addition to this arrangement provided for in the Rule, the government of the said Company, after the death of the blessed Angela, added to them four governors from among the first and foremost citizens, to whom the Company must have recourse in serious matters concerning it ...". <sup>104</sup>

On 11 November 1573, the number of the four agents was completed with the election of the two who were lacking; these were Messer Decio Duccho and Messer Gio. Paolo Poltranga. Out of the governors, Giacomo Chizzola was the only one still alive; to him were added the "magnifici signori" Hippolito Chizzola, Hieronimo Luzzago, Scipion Manerba.<sup>105</sup>

With the entry onto the scene of Cardinal Borromeo, there is no further talk of "governors", but only of "protectors". The precise meaning of this latter term is spelt out in Ch.25 of the Rule approved by the archbishop of Milan: "Because experience has shown that the Company of St Ursula can find itself, concerning temporal matters, faced with many needs which women cannot meet, on account of this it is necessary that three men be elected who will be prepared to come to their aid, according as the need arises, either for the general good of the Company, or for particular matters concerning it. The Mother and the Ladies who govern the Company may propose to the Very Reverend Bishop those who seem to them to be the most suitable in this respect and the most able and ready to intervene when and if a need should arise; but they must be approved and confirmed by his Lordship the Bishop, to whom will also belong the right to change them, when he judges this to be more expedient for the good of the Company". 106

<sup>103</sup> D29.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>104</sup> Cf. SLG, f.45: "quattro huomini maturi et di approbata vita, quali se dimandassero agenti. Et oltra questo ordine datto nella Regola, il governo di detta Compagnia doppo la morte della beata Angela gli aggionse quatro governatori di primi et principali della città, alli quali nelle cose gravi della Compagnia s'havesse a ricorrere...".
<sup>105</sup> Ibid., f.155.

<sup>106</sup> Regola 1582, pp.93-94. "Perché la sperianza ne mostra che molti bisogni occorrere ponno alla Compagnia di Santa Orsola circa le cose temporali, a quali non possono le donne sovenire, per

Several times, especially in these last chapters, we have made allusions to difficult situations, to genuine conflicts which were going to erupt in the two decades after Angela's death. And yet, if one considers the Merician Writings in their entirety and their normative contents, the regulations and the structures of government, one cannot help but admire the wisdom, the foresight and the perspicacity with which everything had been set down so that, notwithstanding the novelty of the forms, no gaps should appear in either the rules or in the authority.

The last years of Angela's life had been a period of creativity, which had been linked to her charisma as Foundress. Those who succeeded the "Madre" after her death thought perhaps that all they had to do in order to immortalise this creative moment of hers, was to enshrine it within the institutional framework. But the "novitas" of the Company's form of life was such that, inevitably, it would suffer from the disappearance of Angela's prestigious figure. The fact remains that the situations resulting from difficulties arising in some of the families, from changes in public opinion, and sometimes from the attitudes adopted by some of the clergy, all combined to shake the Company and to lead it into taking ill-timed measures which, in time, would not be without painful consequences.

questo è necessario, che s'elegghino tre huomini, i quali sian pronti a soccorrergli, secondo che occorrerà il bisogno, o all'universale della Compagnia, o ne' particolari soggetti d'essa. Potranno, la madre et le madonne che sono al governo della Compagnia, proporre a mons. reverendiss. Vescovo quelli che loro pareranno a questo effetto più habili et pronti per sovenire ove farà il bisogno, ma dovranno essere approvati et confirmati da sua Signoria Reverendissima, a cui ancora starà lo mutarli, quando conoscerà esser più spediente per il bene della Compagnia".

# Part III THE MERICIAN HERITAGE

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# Chapter I THE COMPANY AFTER 1540

For the Company of St Ursula, Angela's death ushered in a period which could be defined as one of adjustment, and which was not, therefore, without certain jolts.

Indeed it was to be expected, it was even inevitable that with the disappearance of the charismatic figure of the Foundress, her institution, still in its infancy, should experience the after-effects from it, and that the members of the government (especially Lucrezia Lodrone who, as mother general, had received the Merician heritage) should feel bewildered when faced with the difficulties arising from the task which had been entrusted to them.

It was natural that they should try to find some way of consolidating the Company by intervening on both the disciplinary and juridical levels. And so they prescribed the wearing of a cincture as an outward sign of consecration and of belonging to an association which ought to appear as a compact body; at the same time, they turned to Rome to obtain pontifical approval for the Company and for its Rule.

These two initiatives had regrettable results among those who had not approved of the first or did not understand all the concessions resulting from the second, and could not find an appropriate place for them in Merician literature. They did not know how to insert the former into a suitably reconstructed framework; to understand fully the outcome of the latter, they lacked sufficient knowledge of the procedure in force in the Roman Curia.

A critical re-reading of the documentation and a detailed study of curial procedure, not to mention some completely "new" documents, enabled us to elucidate step by step certain aspects of these initiatives and their real significance.

In the Appendix Note of this chapter, we are presenting our own reconstruction of the list of the first books of the Archives of the Company, about which we were able to find some items of information.

# a) The initial bewilderment

The first author to draw attention to the bewilderment which followed the early fervour and enthusiasm of various circles was Gabriele Cozzano. It is opportune to recall here the works of Angela's secretary-scribe, chancellor of the Company: l'Epistola confortatoria, la Dichiarazione della Bolla, la Risposta contro quelli persuadono la clausura alle vergini di Sant'Orsola.

The Epistola seems to be referring to the first defections, for which Cozzano gives the following reasons: "either owing to poor appreciation of the Rule, or out of fear of not having their needs met and of being abandoned, or through lack of faith in their ability to persevere", and he adds the comment: "as if God, who helps anyone who gives herself to him, would not then come to the aid of those who have offered him their innocence and the first flower of their virginity". So there was a diminution in esteem for this new way of life, a preoccupation with the uncertainty about the future, a certain hesitation when it came to the commitment for life. These turning-points were still contained within the framework of individual vocational crises which could lead to a genuine fear that the danger of contagion might spread further.

All Cozzano's grief pours out in this letter; his search for comforting arguments is touching; his faithful devotion to the Foundress makes him adopt an almost paternal way of speaking and he uses expressions which echo Angela's teachings. Out of the three writings, this one is certainly the calmest and the most serene; but it is also the most grieved, the most perceptive and the most convincing. In it, Cozzano extols the merits of the Company, without falling into the heated polemics of the other two works. *Epistola* and *Risposta* are probably contemporaneous, but they are addressed to different kinds of people and their contents are different. The former is directed to the maidens of the Company and presents a synthesis of the Merician message, which is recalled in an evocative manner, so as to put fresh heart into them at the time of vocational crisis; the latter is directed to the matrons and the "colonelle", in other words, to the women of the government, responsible for the Company.

<sup>1</sup> Epistola, D22.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Dichiarazione, D24.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Risposta, D23.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> D22, [ff.962v-963r].

# b) The pressure towards the cloistered life

The Risposta was written, therefore, to meet a definite set of circumstances: on the one side, the ranks of the members of the Company were being infiltrated by doubt and a certain lack of confidence; and on the other, there were people – especially spiritual persons and ecclesiastics – who had no scruples in expressing reservations about Angela's personality and about the intrinsic value of her work. On many sides a subtle pressure was being exerted on the members of the Company, pushing them towards the monastic life. Some had already allowed themselves to be tempted and had entered a monastery. It was necessary to act with firmness and to safeguard those who remained from feelings

of bitterness or from an inferiority complex.

This is how Cozzano describes the situation: "And now we come to the point of uncovering a subtle poison which the dragon never ceases from spreading within the Company to quench the ardour of love for it in their hearts. There are principally two kinds of it. One poisons minds, under the specious argument that it is better to turn to a more perfect life such as is that lived in the monasteries. The other, using a verbal attack, pokes fun and turns a nose up at the Company. What is this Company that everyone is vying with each other to deride! Friars, priests in particular and other persons of good sense! And to think that doubt has even been voiced about the salvation of the Foundress herself, blamed by so many! And what kind of foundation has it, without any indulgences, with weak ecclesiastical confirmation, barely approved by only a vicar? And certainly she deserves to be reviled, this Sister Angela, who urged so many virgins to promise virginity, without giving due thought to the fact that she was leaving them in the midst of the perils of the world where they could not help falling into danger, or getting married, or taking some other path. Hence it is happening, and one can see it, that there are no gentlemen, or noble ladies, or other persons of consideration, who desire or want their daughters to enter this Company where there are only girls of humble origin, servants and poor creatures",5

The Company, as one can see, was going through what must have seemed an extremely critical period. One can understand why Cozzano took up his pen to write to those in charge, matrons and "colonelle",6 in

<sup>5</sup> D23, ff.14r-15r.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Ibid., "Alle governatrici... cioè alle matrone... et alli colonelli", f.1r; "Voi madonne, et tutte altre governatrici", f.51v.

order to put them on their guard, suggesting all the possible counter

replies to the psychological pressures from outside.

A prey to anxiety and bitterness, disappointed by the defections, worried by the specious arguments advanced by the laity as well as by the clergy, Cozzano tries to assemble together all the valid points to help those governing the Company refute their adversaries.

His style becomes contorted, over-weighted by arguments, so anxious is he not to omit any. So violent is the polemic that Cozzano resorts to invective language, and the frequent references he makes to his own direct and passionate involvement in the affair leave no doubt as to how

charged the atmosphere was.

His impetuous language and the asperity of his arguments are justified perhaps by the fact that Cozzano could see a direct threat to the institution, the only one of its kind in Brescia, which was able to offer so many women the possibility of self-fulfilment in a life of consecration, even though they could not enter a monastery or were not attracted to the cloister.

If some of them were to enter a monastery, this could well unsettle the others; a transformation of the Company into a monastery would once again frustrate the aspirations of the majority of its members and would once again restrict their field of choice.

These apprehensions, and the awareness he had of the present precarious state of the Company, made Cozzano launch forth, in the Risposta, into an exacerbated contrast between religious life and consecrated life in the world, in other words between monastery and Company. It is in the light of this reconstruction of events and of the trends which were gaining ground in public opinion that the Risposta must be read, otherwise one runs the risk of changing it arbitrarily into a pamphlet against religious life.

That the attraction towards the cloistered life might have jeopardised not only the stability but the very existence of the Company, can be gauged from Landini's reticence in the brief historical note of 1566 which he sent to Milan with the text of the Rule: "After her [Angela's] blessed passing away, by divine permisssion the devil wanted to sift the Company by persecuting it; but because it had been planted by the Heavenly Father and was the work of God, it could not be uprooted or destroyed, since after many tribulations it has become ever more beautiful, bigger and glorious".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> LANDINI, Estratto, cit., D15.

Besides this testimony of Landini, Lombardi adds other information which makes the situation clearer: "... Father Gondi, writing in 1600, refers to similar troubles; he says that the difficulties in which the Company finds itself are more visible because parents, especially among the nobility, do not consent to their daughters remaining at home without marrying or entering a convent; they do not want to leave behind them young girls living in freedom in their own homes with the treasure of virginity exposed to danger; and this is why those today suffer just as much from mockery and tribulations, both from within and from without, as did the first virgins of this Company. This is Father Gondi up to here. But Father Ippolito Donesmondi expresses himself even more clearly when, in the Life of Monsignor Francesco Gonzaga, bishop of Mantua,8 he writes that, after the death of Angela, some people thought it advisable that the Ursulines founded by her should all be enclosed in the same place, and make vows like other religious ... In spite of that, there were others who, remaining in their own homes, did not want to shut themselves away, either because they did not have that vocation, or because they were poor and did not have the advantage of a dowry, or because their parents did not want it, or for any other reason there might have been; they led, however, a very exemplary life, to the great edification of their neighbour. They then began to be called Dimesse, as if the Ursulines mentioned above had left them in peace to their way of life".9

And from Lombardi again: "Monsignor Alfonso Paleotti, archbishop of Bologna, in the pastoral Letter which he addressed to his people and which was placed at the beginning of the Rules of the Company of St Ursula printed at Bologna in 1608, says openly that such an Institute as this, as so often happens with God's works, has not been without its contradic-

<sup>8</sup> LOMBARDI is referring here to IPPOLITO DONESMONDI, Vita di Mons. Francesco Gonzaga, Venezia, 1625, lib.4, cap.16. LOMBARDI, Vita, op. cit., p.202.

<sup>9</sup> LOMBARDI, *Ibid.*, pp.201-202. For the term "dimesse", cf. infra, Ch.V, 3.e. "... il padre Gondi, scrivendo nel 1600, allude a simili turbolenze, e dice che la difficoltà di questa Compagnia molto più si vede perchè non sono capaci, massime i nobili, che le figlie loro restino a casa senza maritarsi o monacarsi, non volendo lasciar le giovani dopo loro, nella libertà delle proprie case, col pericoloso tesoro della verginità; però non mancavano a quelle prime vergini di questa Compagnia degli scherni e delle tribulazioni, dentro e fuori, come né anche al presente ne mancano. Fin qui il P. Gondi. Ma più preciso ancora si espresse il P. Ippolito Donesmondi quando, nella Vita di monsignor Francesco Gonzaga vescovo di Mantova scrisse che, mancata la B. Angela, si giudicava espediente da alcuni che le Orsoline da essa fondate si rinchiudessero tutte in un luogo, e facessero i voti delle altre monache... Con tuttociò, perché altre pur si trovavano che, stando nelle proprie case, non volevan rinchiudersi, o perché non avessero quella vocazione, o perché fossero povere e non avessero la comodità della dote, o perché i parenti non volessero, o qualunque altra ne fosse la cagione, menavano nientedimeno vita di gran buon esempio, con molta edificazione del prossimo; cominciarono però queste a chiamarsi *Dimesse*, quasi che dalle Orsoline predette fossero lasciate in pace alla sua via".

tions coming from several sides, backed by apparently irrefutable arguments, the chief of which was that the virgins are not in their right place in secular houses, that the monasteries are made for them and that they cannot, without grave peril,

preserve their virginity elsewhere".10

One can easily understand the apprehension of the principal mother of the Company, Lucrezia Lodrone, when she saw hanging over them the danger of a drastic fall in numbers and of a loss of identity of the Company itself. The first remedy she looked for – everything points to it – was a remedy of a psychological nature one could say, namely to renew among the maidens the sense of belonging to an officially-recognised body, to a kind of "corporation" of the spirit with a dignity of its own; they would express this sense of belonging by a symbol of their consecration, and this symbol would at the same time constitute the exterior sign of a communal reality which was both their strength and their protection. She then looked for a second remedy, of a juridico-canonical nature, which would give a guarantee of stability to the institution as such. A leather cincture would be the symbol-sign; a pontifical Bull of approval would restore faith in the institution.

# c) The cincture

Lucrezia Lodrone thought this cincture might help the members to have a stronger sense of belonging to an Institute and give the Company a new prestige by means of a distinctive sign in common, but on the

contrary it became a cause of division.

The documentation for this period is poor and discontinuous. Doneda merely says that in 1545, "the Lord allowed a split in the Company to begin to appear which, becoming increasingly more evident with time and stirring up more and more heated feelings, lasted several years and placed the Company in the obvious danger of breaking up and disappearing".<sup>11</sup>

Lombardi, in a less veiled manner, sums up the controversy which had arisen at the very heart of the Company: "From some papers to be

<sup>11</sup> DONEDA, Vita, op. cit., pp.93-94. "permise il Signore, che nella Compagnia incominciasse a sorgere uno scisma che, acquistando forza col tempo, e sempre più esacerbando gli animi, durò più

anni, e pose la Compagnia stessa in evidente pericolo di sciogliersi e annientarsi".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Ibid., p.201. Cf. infra, Ch.V, 3.c. "Monsignor Alfonso Paleotti, arcivescovo di Bologna, nella Lettera pastorale al suo popolo indirizzata, e posta in fronte alle Regole della Compagnia di S. Orsola stampate in Bologna nel 1608, dice apertamente che a tale Instituto, com'è solito delle opere di Dio, non gli mancarono contraddizioni da varie bande, con ragioni assai apparenti, e quella sopra tutte, che le Vergini non stanno bene per le case secolari, che i monasteri sono fatti per esse, né si possono senza grave pericolo conservare altrove".

found in the Archives at Brescia, it can be seen that, even before 1545, the first sparks of this fire appeared. Almost immediately after the death of the blessed Foundress, in fact, the greater part of the Ursulines with the Countess Lucrezia di Lodrone, mother general of the Company, observing that blessed Angela had not ordered her daughters to wear round their waist some sign to indicate their virginal profession, as for example the cord of St Francis after the fashion of the Tertiaries of which she was one, or again the cincture, such as was worn by the Augustinian nuns, thought of making it compulsory for all the Ursulines to wear the leather cincture as a distinctive sign.

"Some of the first companions were of a different opinion; their leader was Dame Ginevra Luzzago, supported by Cozzano, former secretary and chancellor of the Blessed. They resisted this idea with all their force, at the Curia of Brescia as well as that of Rome. The others, nevertheless, by a decree of 11 December 1545, gave the order on their own authority that, under pain of being expelled from the Company, everyone, in order to be different from other women, had to wear the cincture. And so, as a result of this decree, the rebels were expelled. But the vicar-general, Monsignor Ferretti, to whom those expelled had recourse, ordered their adversaries to desist from making changes. And because they continued to treat the others as if they really had been expelled, he passed a decree annulling the order they had given and ordered them by virtue of holy obedience and under pain of excommunication to leave everyone free and in such a way that no-one was to be further troubled regarding this. There is still kept a petition drawn up by Cozzano with the purpose of preventing any further change; this was because those who wanted the cincture also tried to introduce the colour black for the habit. The Bull arrived at Brescia two months later", 12

LOMBARDI, Vita, op. cit., pp.202-203. "Dalle Scritture nell'archivio di Brescia esistenti consta che, ancora prima del 1545, apparvero le prime scintille di questo fuoco: poiché quasi subito che fu morta la beata Fondatrice, la maggior parte delle Orsoline colla contessa Lugrezia di Lodrone, madre generale della Compagnia, osservando che la beata Angela non avea ordinato alle sue figlie di portare, per indizio di profession verginale, alcun segno cinto ai lombi, come sarebbe il cordone di S. Francesco a modo delle Terziarie qual ella era, ovvero la cintura, come stilano le Agostiniane, pensarono d'introdurre che tutte le Orsoline usassero il cinturino di corame per distintivo. Del partito contrario erano alcune delle prime compagne, capo delle quali era la signora Ginevra Luzzago assistita dal Cozzano, già segretario e cancelliere della Beata. Quelle, con tutta la forza, si opposero tanto nella Curia di Brescia, quanto in quella di Roma. Le altre, nondimeno, con decreto degli 11 dicembre 1545, di loro autorità comandarono che, sotto pena di essere scancellate dalla Compagnia, dovessero tutte, per differenziarsi dall'altre donne, l'assumere la cintura. In conseguenza dunque di tal decreto le renitenti furono discacciate. Ma il vicario generale monsignor Ferretti, a cui ricorsero le espulse, intimò alle contrarie che desistessero dal far novità. E perché continuarono a trattar le altre come se fossero espulse realmente, fece un decreto col quale, annullando il precetto fatto da quelle, comandò

Lombardi does not give us the reasons which had made Lucrezia Lodrone – and the others with her – impose the cincture. They were probably the ones we have given above. We would like to add to these the desire to do something which, in people's eyes, would reduce the difference between the Company, with its secular character, and the canonical form of the consecrated life lived in the monastery.

The decision to impose the cincture was thus taken on 11 December 1545 by "la molta più maggiore parte de la confraternità et gubernatrici de ditta Compagnia", as is stated in the *Ordinatione* printed later in the appendix to the *Regola.*<sup>13</sup> Lombardi does not say if the minutes of this council-meeting still existed in his day; their disappearance prevents us from knowing today, even approximately, what the percentage was of those who opposed this "very large majority" who had decided in favour of the cincture. Certainly Ginevra Luzzago, with the support of Cozzano, and a certain number of virgins of the Company, were among the opposition party.

The injunction to wear the cincture was given under pain of expulsion; as a result, the recalcitrants had to be crossed off the list of members. Whatever their number, according to what Lombardi says, they appealed to the vicar-general. And then Monsignor Giovan Pietro Ferretti, suffragan bishop of the ordinary of Brescia, would have first enjoined Lucrezia Lodrone and her followers to refrain from making any changes; and then he would have issued a decree threatening to excommunicate them if they persisted in their intention.

We have used the conditional tense because our research on this precise point yielded nothing. Lombardi himself, moreover, does not give any further information about these two interventions by Monsignor Ferretti.

An earlier decree by this same Ferretti, on the other hand, is reported in the edition of the *Regola* published by Turlino as well as in the edition revised and enlarged under the instructions of Cardinal Borromeo.<sup>14</sup> It is the *Confirmatio* of 19 May 1545 by which, in his authority as vicar-general, Ferretti praises the Rule of Angela and gives it a new approval. It is to be assumed that this confirmation had been requested by a petition submitted by the Luzzago group.

in virtù di santa ubbidienza e sotto pena di scomunica, che tutte fossero lasciate in libertà, e che a niuna venisse più recata molestia per ciò. Conservasi ancora una supplica stesa dal Cozzano, acciocché fosse impedita ogn'altra novità; poiché quelle che volevano la cintura tentavano d'introdurre anche il color nero nell'abito. Due mesi dopo arrivò a Brescia la Bolla".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Ibid., Regola, Brescia 1582, pp.101-102.

Meanwhile, the Bull,<sup>15</sup> requested in the name of the members of the government of the Company of St Ursula, had arrived. It reinforced their right to legislate and protected them from any censure when exercising this right. We will have to return later to this subject of the Bull.

Once again, it is Lombardi who gives a general outline of the controversy which arose within the Company: "The Bull arrived at Brescia two months later. In it Paul III confirmed the Rule and the Institute; and the cincture-party, apart from the fact that they had obtained the Bull, had also requested that the Conservators be of like opinion to them, and so, on 20 April 1546, they first of all confirmed the decree passed on 11 December of the preceding year, and then they issued the order which can be read at the end of the printed Rule ... They also obtained from the Pope an indulgence of one hundred days for those who wore the cincture. These, in agreement with the two Conservators, drew up the Libro sigillato ed autenticato, which Landini spoke about in his letter; and by a decree of 20 June 1546, it was decided and concluded that all those who were not inscribed in this authentic Book would be expelled from the Company, as had been said and also added in the Rule". 16 The thorough study which we made of this controversy modifies some of the previous conclusions about it.

We can reconstruct therefore the order of events by referring to the documents which have survived. With the arrival of the Bull, Lucrezia Lodrone took the situation in hand again by virtue of the legitimate authority which had been solemnly granted her. This was made all the easier by the fact that the execution of the Bull had been entrusted not only to the ordinary of Verona, but also to two ecclesiastics who, one can assume, were favourably disposed towards the mother general and the Company, namely Aurelio Durante, archdeacon, and Donato Savallo, archpriest of the cathedral. The executory process of the Bull took place on 14 April 1546; already on 20 April the *Ordinatione* mentioned above 17 was promulgated. Invoking the decision of 11 December 1545 and the

<sup>15</sup> D18.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> LOMBARDI, *Vita, op. cit.*, p.203. "Due mesi dopo arrivò a Brescia la Bolla... in cui Paolo III conferma la Regola e l'Instituto; ed il partito della cintura, oltre ad aver ottenuta la Bolla, impetrato avendo che ancora i Conservatori fossero di suo genio, da questi sotto il dì 20 Aprile 1546 fu confermato prima il decreto stabilito l'anno avanti addì 11 Dicembre; poi fu fatta l'ordinazione che leggesi a piè della Regola stampata... Ottennero anche dal Papa una Indulgenza di cento giorni per quelle che avessero la cintura. Queste, d'accordo coi due Conservatori, inventarono il *Libro sigillato ed autenticato*, di cui parla nella sua lettera il P. Landini, e con decreto de' 20 Giugno 1546, restò deciso e concluso, che s'intendessero cacciate dalla Compagnia tutte quelle che in detto Libro autentico, come accennasi, e come pure aggiunto fu nella Regola, scritte non fossero".

faculties granted by the Bull, the two Brescian "executors" (or "conservators") of the Bull laid down that the virgins must "wear a cincture of black leather, about the width of a little finger, as a sign of true continence ... under pain of being expelled from the said Company ...".

The Ordinatione also indicated the reasons for this decision: "through these exterior signs the interior spirituality of a person is often made known, and they show that the person belongs to the said congre-

gation; they also indicate true humility and perfect chastity".

Without any delay, Lucrezia Lodrone, with five matrons of the government, made provision for the introduction of a "Libro bollato", or official register carrying the signatures and seals of the "conservators", with the aim of entering in it the names of those who had agreed to wear the cincture. The others, namely those who had refused to do this, would find themselves by this very fact expelled from the Company.<sup>18</sup>

Among those who had subscribed to starting this "Libro bollato" was Isabetta Prato, one of the earliest matrons; it was she who had offered, in her house in the Cathedral square, the oratory which had been the cradle of the Company. And her presence, never before commented upon, is enough to weaken the accusations of misuse of power which have been levied against Countess Lodrone. But the names of Ginevra Luzzago, Maria Avogadro and Giovanna Monti are missing. With regard to the last two, Giovanna Monti della Corte was already dead in 1548 according to the "polizza d'estimo" of that year; Maria Avogadro, who belonged to Ginevra's circle, had probably joined sides with her in the opposition-party. Neither of them appears in the notarial act of 1545.

We are giving here a report of the minutes of the inauguration of the "Libro bollato" as they must have been set out on the first page of this register, and as they were copied into the Secondo Libro Generale, on f.35r-v.

"Institution and arrangement of the [here the written word 'present' has been crossed out with a pen] 'libro bollato'.

"In the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. After the arrival of the apostolic Bulls given in Rome in the year 1544 on 9 June, in the tenth year of the Pontificate of our lord Pope

<sup>18</sup> SLG, f.35r-v.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. supra, Pt.II, Ch.VIII, note 70.

Paul III, and addressed to the Reverend Prelates the Archdeacon and the Archpriest of the Cathedral of Brescia, the process was fulminated in the customary form on 14 April 1546, in the fourth indiction, and drawn up by D. Gio. Battista Trappa da Quinzano, notary; in these Bulls is contained the quasi-divine and highly privileged erection, that is the confirmation or reform of the Company of the maidens of the glorious Lady St Ursula, founded earlier however through the good memory of the late Lady Sister Angela of the Third Order of Friars Minor, a woman of great austerity of life and reputed blessed by many after her death, and it was ordained ut infra.

"By the magnificent Lady Countess Lucretia da Lodron and the other magnificent Ladies whose names follow, that is madonna Chaterina di Mey, madonna Orsolina di Gavardi, madonna ...[space], madonna Veronica di Buzzi, madonna Isabetta da Prato, madonna Leonella di Pedezocchi, all established in this government by the lips of the aforementioned defunct Angela herself, and by the agents or governors and by the confraternity. In virtue of the power granted them by His Holiness our Lord the Pope in the said Bulls, and in no way deviating from the terms, they have established the present register in which will be inscribed all the maidens who wish to belong to this most blessed Rule, wearing the prescribed cincture, and persevering under the orders, obedience and observance of the said Lady Countess and successor to the Foundress, appointed mother and lady-governor by the mouth of the late aforementioned Madre Suor Angela and by the said lady-governors, governors and confraternity; and this is meant to ensure that now and in the future there shall be one sole body and all controversy or seeds of discord shall be rooted out and there shall be only one sheepfold and one shepherd; and those who are not inscribed in this book are not to be considered as belonging any longer to the congregation; they will not be able to enjoy the indulgences, graces, privileges, immunities, advantages or alms and benefits ordinary and extraordinary granted to those who belong to the said holy Company of St Ursula, inscribed in this book and obedient as it is laid down above, even if the others claim that in the past they belonged to this Company.

"And this in accordance with the commands laid down for the above-mentioned maidens by the said Lady Countess, the governors, the lady-governors and the confraternity, as well as with the other constitutions and ordinances left by the aforesaid Madre Suor Angela, foundress as has been said above, and with her quasi-divine testament, and they will do that in the best way, etc. they know and can, seeking to depart in no way from these orders and constitutions, but rather to extend them.

## "Given at Brescia, on the 21st day of June 1546". 19h

Lombardi must have been perplexed by this "Libro bollato". We found in the Archives of the Patriarchal Seminary at Venice a letter from him, dated 3 June 1758, addressed to Father Francesco of Desenzano who at that time was occupied at Brescia with the diocesan process of Angela's beatification. In the letter Lombardi writes: "I seem to remember writing some time ago, either to Signorina Lelia<sup>20</sup> or to Your Paternity, that neither Father Landini's letter nor the transcription of the 1546 'libro bollato' which he spoke about in this letter, must be inserted in the Process, so as to avoid running into a lot of unnecessary trouble. In case I did not do so in the past, I am making up for it now by repeating these words ."<sup>21</sup> Lombardi was perhaps afraid that the evidence of the disputes

<sup>19b</sup> "Institution et ordination del [...] libro bolato. In nomme del Padre, del Figliuolo et del Spirito Santo. Amen. Doppo che furono gionte le apostolice Bolle datte in Roma l'anno 1544 alli 9 giugno, l'anno decimo del Pontificato de nostro signore Papa Pavolo III, direttive alli R.di prelati Archidiacono et Arciprete della cathedrale di Brescia, fu fulminato il processo in forma consueta sotto il giorno 14 d'aprile 1546, nella indictione quarta, rogata per D.Gio. Battista Trappa da Quinzano, nodaro, nelle quali si contiene la quasi divina et amplamente privilegiata erectione o sia confirmatione overo reformatione della Compagnia delle virgini della trionphante madonna santa Orsola, fondata però peravanti per la buona memoria della quondam madonna suor Angela del Terzo Ordine di Frati minori, donna di austerissima vita et da molti doppo la morte sua reputata beata, fu ordinato ut infra.

"Per la magnifica signora contessa madonna Lucretia da Lodron, et le altre infrascritte magnifice matrone videlicet Chaterina di Mey, madonna Orsolina di Gavardi, madonna...[lacuna], madonna Veronica di Buzzi, madonna Isabetta da Prato, madonna Leonella di Pedezocchi, tutte di propria bocca instituite al governo tale dalla quondam Suor Angela antedetta et per li agenti seu governatori et confraternita. Secondo la potestà a loro datta dalla Santità de nostro Signor Papa in dette Bolle, et da quelle per niun modo partendose, hanno fatto lo presente libro, dove saranno descritte tutte le virgini voranno esser di detta felicissima regola portando la cinctura comandata, et stando alli ordini, obedientia, et osservanza della predetta signora contessa et successore sua, come madre et gubernatrice instituita di propria bocca dalla antedetta Madre Suor Angela et dalle prefate gubernatrici, gubernatori et confraternita, et questo acciò sia et rimanga un corpo solo, et che ogni controversia et discordia, overo zizania, sia estirpata, et sia un'ovile et un solo pastore, et quelle che non si troveran scritte sul presente libro, non s'intendano esser di tale congregatione né galder debba delle indulgentie, gratie, privilegii, immunità, utilità over eleemosine et beneffitii soliti et non soliti, spettanti a quelle saranno di detta santa Compagnia di Santa Orsola descritte nel presente libro et obedienti come disopra, ancora che per altri tempi pretendessero esser state di quelle di essa Compagnia.

"Et questo inherendosi alli comandamenti fatti per detta signora contessa, gubernatori, gubernatrici et confraternita alle virgini antedette, et alle altre constitutioni et ordini lasciati per la predetta Madre Suor Angela, fondatrice, come disopra, et al suo quasi divino testamento, et con ogni altro meglior modo etc. sanno et puonno, alle quale non s'intende ullo modo derogare, ma più presto ampliarli.

"Dato in Brescia, alli 21 di giugno 1546".

<sup>20</sup> Lelia Malvezzi, then mother general of the Company of St Ursula at Brescia.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> ASPV, Sala Monico, XXa, ms.786, 4. "Mi pare che scrivessi tempo fa o alla signorina Lelia, o a Vostra Paternità, che né la lettera del padre Landini, né il transunto del libro bollato del 1546, accennato in detta lettera, si inserissero nel Processo, per non andar a cercar guai senza proposito. Supplisco ora ripetendo il medesimo, se avessi mancato in passato".

and the divisions might have some unfortunate repercussions or throw some shadow on the figure of the "Madre". Whatever the case, the extract from Landini's letter (published in the appendix to the Regole printed at Milan as from 1569) was made known to the witnesses interrogated in the course of the canonical process and widely quoted by them in support of their depositions.

#### 2. THE PONTIFICAL APPROVAL

To improve the endangered fortunes of the Company of St Ursula and to increase respect for it in its members and all the city, Lucrezia Lodrone set great store on the Bull requested from Rome and on the prestige that pontifical approval would confer on the institution by enriching it with some indulgences, as was the custom. Had not Cozzano written that one of the criticisms levied against the Company was precisely that of being "without any indulgences, with weak ecclesiastical confirmation, barely approved by only a Vicar?" <sup>22</sup>

To rebut this objection, Cozzano had resorted to various arguments; among others, he had insisted on the value of an obedience and a fidelity unconditioned by the promise of indulgences. As for the fact that the Rule had been approved "by only a Vicar", he had given a double justification for it: on one side, for the time being, God preferred an obedience which needed no incentives ("senza speroni"); and on the other, the Rule had not yet been submitted to the Holy See for pontifical approval: "Although this has not yet appeared in any Bull or Brief of the apostolic See because this light of life, set alight here by God in our day, has not yet been presented to the Holy See, or again because it is not the moment to spread in such a way this new divine grace, one thing is certain, and that is that, at this particular time, the obedience carried out without incentives and in the strength of faith alone pleases God and the Church more than if it depended on written promises and relied on a recognised authority".<sup>23</sup>

And so at the time of the Risposta, Cozzano seemed to exclude the imminent arrival of a Bull of approval for the Company. When, then, had it been requested? In whose name? Who had requested it, and in what terms?

23 Ibid., f.44r.

<sup>22</sup> Risposta, D23, f.14v.

The question of the petition is complex and controversial in certain of its aspects. After he had read the Bull – and this must certainly have been in the period after April 1546 – Gabriele Cozzano prepared a translation of it into the vernacular, together with some explanatory notes. This is his third writing: *Dichiarazione della Bolla del Papa Paolo III*. The tone of it betrays the end of a wait.

"And so at last we have finally read and re-read this long-desired bull in which our Sovereign Pontiff lays open to this holy Company the innermost depths of the great kindness of his most generous heart. And we have looked at it with such jubilant joy, as if the living source of all kindness had come down to us here from heaven. Because today the Holy Father has shed such an abundance of apostolic liberalities on our pure, royal and angelic Company that they could scarcely have asked for more. So let us rejoice together. Let us be jubilant and exult in our hearts and cry out our joy on all sides with festive voices".<sup>24</sup>

Cozzano's joy and satisfaction are evident. He stresses how the Pope's liberality has far exceeded the expectations of those who had forwarded the petition: "tanta abundantia di liberalitade apostolica ha sparso il Padre Santo... quanta più domandare a pena potevano". The third person plural "potevano", which is to be found in the Vatican APC as well as in the copy in the AGUUR, and the dedication of this writing to Ginevra Luzzago and the Company, present us with a kind of dichotomy. It is as if Ginevra and the Company of St Ursula were in opposition to the "others". Others who, in this case, were Lucrezia Lodrone and the members of the government.

Once again, and precisely because of these "others", spite, satisfaction, polemics, and above all the fear that the text dictated to him by the Foundress and so faithfully collected together by him might in some way be mutilated, all combined to the detriment of clarity. Cozzano, in this instance, showed that he was completely in the dark regarding the procedure followed by the Roman Curia for the promulgation of Bulls, and this ignorance made him prejudiced in his interpretation of the pontifical document.

In our exposition we will often have to refer to the curial praxis to make it easier to understand certain details.

The first step to be taken to obtain a pontifical document of approval of the Company was the drawing up of the "supplica", and it is

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> D24, [f.969r-v]; AGUUR, B.6, f.1398v.

precisely about this petition that there is no shortage of inferences and confusion, originating from the lack of clarity with which Cozzano sets out the facts and from the consequent difficulty presented in reading his Dichiarazione.

Now, the government of the Company had turned to the Holy See to obtain the approval of the Company and also of the Rule. As was the procedure in force, the petition then had to be drawn up in Rome "in forma curiae", in other words in the curial language which, by using longstanding expressions, specific detailed data and formulas of conces-

sion, provided the framework for the future document.

The Bull then referred to the petition, to grant the favours requested. A reconstruction of the petition, though, by using Cozzano's annotated translation of the Bull could lead us into error, because what he says is dictated a posteriori by his spirited defence of his theses and by his irritation at the thought of the use that Lucrezia Lodrone will make of the concessions obtained.

A first confusion concerns the drawing up of the petition and its author.

The procedure requires that a Bull take up again, in the "narratio",25 the same terms as the favour solicited; in this specific case, it meant introducing the Company of St Ursula, on whose behalf the request was then made for approval.

Before translating this part of the Bull, Cozzano sets out its contents in order. We are doing the same, setting out in our turn his exposition of the "narratio", which Cozzano himself calls "supplicatione".

The "supplicatione" consists of two main parts: 26

first part. "the way in which the Rule and the Company were planted":

a) "how some virgins, divinely inspired, planted this Company";

b) "how, to govern this congregation, they made a certain rule";

c) "how this rule was confirmed by the Holy See"; second part. "contains what is requested":

a) "it is petitioned that this Company and rule may be reinforced even more by the solid strength of the Apostolic See";

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> For the vocabulary and the praxis of the Roman Curia in this section, cf. PAULUS RABIKAUSKAS, SJ, Diplomatica Pontificia (Praelectionum lineamenta), ed. IV, ad usum Auditorum, Università Gregoriana editr., Roma 1980. For the basic norms, see the same author, Diplomatica Generalis (Praelectionum lineamenta), ed. IV, ad usum Studentium, Romae 1976. Fr P. Rabikauskas, professor of the Pontifical Gregorian University, very kindly guided us in this far from easy study of the curial praxis and in the analysis of the documents concerning the Bull. <sup>26</sup> D24, [ff.972v-973r].

b) "and that the Apostolic See may be willing to take any other suitable measures".

A wave of memories, stirred up by the translation of the first part of the "supplicatione" which contained a very short historical excursus on the Company, makes Cozzano linger over recalling its origins, the first followers of the "Madre", her moral personality and her way of governing, her vocation of Foundress.

He does this in a passage which he entitles "Dechiaratione della prima principal parte della Sopplicatione", and it is clear that he is getting ready to speak about the institution of the Company and its Rule. The title, though, has misled some historiographers; they thought Cozzano intended speaking about the petition sent to Rome to obtain the Bull:

"I myself and a Canon doctor, Dusina by name, personally presented it [the Rule] to Lorenzo Muzio, who was then Vicar [General], and it was he who often said while he was reading it (I remember) that it had been done with great judgment. The notary who applied the seal to it was called Boarno. It was written by my own hand, and it was entirely composed by me. But the contents were by the Holy Spirit, dictated through the intermediary of the Foundress".<sup>27</sup>

Let us say immediately that this testimony carries considerable weight. It concerns the relationship between Cozzano-scribe and Angela-author regarding the Rule and justifies his strenuous defence of the text against any attempt to change it: "It was written by my own hand, and it was entirely composed by me. But the contents were by the Holy Spirit, dictated through the intermediary of the Foundress". This did not escape the attention of Father Ansgario Faller.<sup>28</sup>

Faino read this passage as if Cozzano was speaking about the petition instead of the Rule. He was followed in this by Doneda whom Lombardi reproduces almost word for word, taking over as his own Doneda's statement that Angela, towards the end of her life, had turned to the Holy See to obtain the approval of the Company: "She had set her heart on obtaining from the Holy Apostolic See the approval of her Order, which was increasing day by day. She had recourse therefore to her secretary and very close friend Gabriele Cozzano so that he, as a man of letters and a lawyer by profession, might write, with all the proper curial formulas, a petition which she intended to have presented to the

<sup>28</sup> ANSGARIO FALLER, Introduzione a S. ANGELA MERICI. Regola Ricordi Legati, op. cit., p.XXX.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> Ibid., [f.973v]. According to the minutes of the chapter-meeting of the Canons of the cathedral on 2 December 1534, Andrea Dusino was "Decretorum doctor", AC, n.37.

Sovereign Pontiff. 'The petition', says Cozzano himself, 'was written by my own hand, but the contents were by the Holy Spirit, dictated through the intermediary of the Foundress'. But as these steps usually dragged on for a long time, even though she took sensible precautions to bring this affair to a conclusion, the Blessed could not enjoy in her own lifetime the fruit of her labours and diligence".<sup>29</sup>

It is clear that Lombardi did not take time to examine the subject carefully by analysing Cozzano's words; he relied instead on the authority of Doneda, without checking the statement critically. He may have been influenced also by the fact that he had seen (or had heard mention of) another petition which Cozzano had put forward with a different purpose in mind: "There is still preserved a petition drawn up by Cozzano with the aim of preventing any other change, because those who wanted the cincture were also trying to introduce the colour black for the habit".<sup>30</sup>

But regarding the petition sent to Rome by the members of the government, so far we have no information.

Chancellor of the Company and, what is more, personally nominated by Angela as its protector, Cozzano naturally would not have been ignorant about it. But his incompetence with regard to the language and the specific contents of the pontifical documents made him react overhastily to some of the concessions granted by the Bull, as if they had been requested through "false and forged petitions". It was really a question, though, as we shall see, of set formulas associated with the normal procedure.

As for the petition drawn up "in forma curiae", we know that as a rule the petitions presented to the Roman Curia and duly approved by the competent authority (as was the case with the petition addressed by Angela regarding her own burial)<sup>31</sup> were copied into books called "Re-

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p.203. We did not find any other evidence about this petition. [cf. Italian text in note 12]. <sup>31</sup> Cf. supra, Pt.II, Ch.VI, 2.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Stavale sopra tutto a cuore d'ottenere dalla S. Sede Apostolica l'approvazion del suo Ordine, che ognidì più andavasi aumentando. Ricorse perciò al suo segretario e famigliarissimo Gabriele Cozzano, affinch'egli, come letterato e causidico di professione, mettesse in iscrittura colle formole proprie della Curia una supplica, ch'ella disegnava di far presentare al Sommo Pontefice. 'La supplica, dice il Cozzano medesimo, fu scritta di mia mano, ma i sensi furono dello Spirito Santo, dettati per via della Fondatrice'. Siccome però tali maneggi sogliono sempre andare alla lunga, così non ostante i saggi provvedimenti da lei usati per condurre a termine questo affare, non poté la Beata godere in vita il frutto de' suoi sudori e diligenze''. In quoting Cozzano, Lombardi, Vita, op. cit., p.113, attributes to him the expression: La supplica fu scritta, but the words La supplica are not in the passage by Cozzano, which begins with Fu scritta. For the other two authors: FAINO, Vita, op. cit., p.67; DONEDA, Vita, op. cit., p.80.

gistra supplicationum" or into other similar books (the Penitentiary, though, did not register the petitions connected with "casi occulti" or "in formationis"."

"in foro conscientiae").

This transcription into the registers contained all the terms of the original; these, in fact, had to supply the elements needed to draw up the pontifical document. It also carried the formula of approbation and the corresponding date which had been added when the Pope had expressed his consent.

The petitions of the tenth year of the pontificate of Paul III (1 November 1543 - 31 October 1544) fill 29 large registers of the Vatican Secret Archives,<sup>32</sup> and some of them are even to be found in later registers. We consulted more than a third of these registers, even though we knew, as asserted by Katterbach,<sup>33</sup> that the petitions of the "secret" Bulls of the time of Paul III are lost. And it is precisely to this group of "secret" Bulls that the Bull for the Company belongs.

The question of this petition also interested Teresa Ledóchowska, but the arguments she uses and the conclusions she arrived at are not

really tenable.34

## b) The recipients and the executors

The register marked Reg.Vat.1696 in the Vatican Secret Archives contains two transcriptions of the Bull "Regimini Universalis Ecclesiae" of 9 June 1544, on ff.193r-195v and on ff.223r-225v. In both cases the text of the Bull is inserted into the text of the executory Mandate; in other words, it includes the "commissio" of the "executio" to the three executors charged with seeing that it was carried out.

The transcription into the register was a guarantee of the promulgation of the Bull and also of the exact correspondence between the Bull that was sent and the one entered into the register. The fact that the Bull "Regimini Universalis Ecclesiae" has been registered twice in the form of an executory mandate must be ascribed to an oversight of the copyist (in this case, a certain V. Bassa). So the apostolic secretary Blosio 35 worked on the second transcription; he crossed out the parts regarding

KATTERBACH, Inventario, op. cit., p.113, note 1.
 LEDÓCHOWSKA, Angela, op. cit., II, pp.16-29 and pp.299-300.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> Reg. Suppl. 2497-2525; cf. Bruno Katterbach, *Inventario dei Registri delle Suppliche*, Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1932, pp. 125-126.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup> Blosio Palladio (or Biagio Pallai) was elected bishop of Foligno on 5 November 1540; on 24 January 1547, he renounced this dignity, without ever having – apparently – received episcopal consecration. Cf. Hierarchia Catholica, III<sup>2</sup>, Münster 1923, p.199; Ludwig Von Pastor, Storia dei Papi, V, Roma 1931, pp.696-697.

the "commissio" of the "executio" and confirmed the two lines of erasures with his own signature, putting "Blo" at the beginning of each line and "sius" at the end.

The Register 1696 is reserved for the so-called "secret" Bulls, which were sent on behalf of certain persons and were exempt from the usual taxes. At that time the apostolic letters of this kind were prepared and composed outside the Chancellery, by the office of the "sommista" (created in the second half of the 15th century) and by one of the Pope's secretaries.

There is another fact which shows that this Bull did not pass through the Chancellery: at the beginning of its transcription into the Reg.Vat.1696, on the right-hand side there is no corresponding signature of the abbreviator of the Chancellery, in other words, of the minute-writer. But in the top left-hand margin there is the name of the apostolic secretary "Blosius electus Fulginatensis", elected bishop of Foligno but not yet consecrated.

As far as we can tell, the printed version of this Bull was published for the first time in 1620, in the appendix to the Regola printed at Brescia by Pietro Maria Marchetti. It consists of the text, incomplete, of the executory Mandate, with the Bull incorporated; this text carries the following signatures: "Blos. Elect. Fulgin", "M. Card. Crescentius", "Registrata apud Blosium Secretarium".<sup>36</sup>

Marcello Crescenzi was a Roman; he had been created cardinal by Paul III on 2 June 1542; bishop of Marsico and a celebrated lawyer, he

was secretary of the Signatura of the Briefs.37

Bernardino Faino published the text of the Bull in the appendix to the Regola della Compagnia delle Vergini di Sant'Orsola di Brescia,<sup>38</sup> with the signatures mentioned above, adding to it a testimony of the utmost importance: in the Archives of the Company of Brescia there were two pontifical documents, the principal Bull and the executory Mandate.

We do not know which of the apostolic writers wrote the text. Following the usual practice, he had to do it on parchment, using for both the principal Bull and the executory one the special writing, without punctuation and diphthongs, which was reserved for this kind of document.

36 Regola, Brescia, 1620 cit., pp.97-102.

38 Regola, Brescia-Bologna 1672 cit., pp.159-164.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> PASTOR, Storia, op. cit., V, p.134; MORONI, Dizionario, op. cit., Vol.VI, p.121, article "Breve".

The principal Bull does not seem to have been addressed to any one

or more persons in particular.

The formula "ad perpetuam rei memoriam", which replaced the mention of one or more recipients (the so-called "inscriptio"), indicated the solemn nature of the document ("litterae sollemnes") and gave it the juridical importance of a constitution or of a decree.

The principal Bull must certainly have been handed over to the procurator "of the governors and the lady-governors" of the Company,

who had forwarded the petition in their name.

In the text, the Pope referred to the petition "of the governors and lady-governors" of the Company; he absolved them from any canonical sanction and granted them the right to pass laws.

The expression "governors and lady-governors" in the Bull need not cause surprise. We have already seen how Angela's Rule envisaged a government composed of virgin-colonelle, lady-governors and menagents, assigning specific tasks to each category. Hence the origin of the expression "governors and lady-governors" used to indicate all the members of the government.

The testimony published by Faino, mentioned earlier, also helps to interpret the meaning of the "commissio" given to the three executors, for it is entitled "Bulla eadem pro suo usu et executione intimata", 39 and says precisely: "Cum exemplari plene authentico Bullae supradictae, extat apud Societatem Brixiensem Sanctae Ursulae etiam alia Bulla, similis data anno et die iisdem, directaque Episcopo Veronensi uti proximo, nec non pro tempore existentium Archidiacono et Archipresbitero Ecclesiae Cathedralis Brixiae, electis in ea apostolicis conservatoribus pro eiusdem executione, etc.".

The procedure laid down that three executors should be responsible for publishing the concession obtained from the Apostolic See, for ordering its execution and for seeing that the conditions set out in the Bull were respected. As a rule these executors were suggested by the signatory of the petition, who selected them from among those favourably disposed towards the decisions contained in the Bull. This juridical procedure was a most standard one; the three "dignitates", who had to see that the Bull was carried out by those concerned, were invested with the authority necessary for its publication and its formal notice.

In this particular case, the three chosen were the bishop of Verona, who at that time was Pietro Lippomano, and two ecclesiastics of the cathedral of Brescia, the archdeacon Aurelio Durante and the archpriest

Donato Savallo.

<sup>39</sup> Regola, Brescia-Bologna 1672, cit., p.165.

Unaware of this point of the procedure, Gabriele Cozzano, in the *Dichiarazione della Bolla*, reacts sharply to the fact that the bishop of Verona has been nominated: "I do not know to what purpose our ladygovernors asked for the Bishop of Verona as protector, refusing our own Episcopal See which has been so favourable to us; and this they have done unjustly and maliciously, without seeking counsel or consent".<sup>40</sup>

It must be noted that the executory Mandate does not give the names of the persons who correspond with the selected "dignitates". According to the curial practice, which had been in use since the 12th century, the omission of the name or names in the "inscriptio" of a papal document meant "quod non scribitur personae sed tantum dignitati".<sup>41</sup>

At the time of the Bull, the bishop of Brescia was Cardinal Andrea Cornaro (c. 1509-1551); he succeeded his uncle Francesco in the episcopal see in 1532, but he only took possession of it in 1546.<sup>42</sup> His vicar was Annibale Grisoni, who would be succeeded by Gian Pietro Ferretti in 1545.

Some time earlier, the archdeacon of Brescia and the vicars-general of Bergamo and Cremona had been commissioned to put into execution a Brief addressed to the Abbess and the religious of the monastery Santa Maria di Pace in Brescia. It was the vicar-general of Cremona who had then drawn up the act in canonical form; the notarial act of the juridical intimation, or "processo fulminato", had been drawn up in the normal way.<sup>43</sup>

Cozzano had wondered why the bishop of Verona had been chosen. Faino seems to give him an answer in the text quoted above, justifying

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>40</sup> D24, [f.972r]. We feel we must draw attention to how RINALDINI, Edizione anastatica, op. cit., p.297, reports this passage of Cozzano: "Io non so per quale fine le nostre governatrici avrebbero domandato il Vescovo di Verona come protettore, omettendo di indirizzarsi al nostro seggio episcopale che ci è sempre stato totalmente favorevole, che è il nostro naturale protettore. Esse, se lo hanno fatto lo hanno fatto con malizia, ingiustamente, senza domandare l'opinione del consiglio...". ("I do not know to what purpose our lady-governors have asked for the Bishop of Verona as protector, failing to address themselves to our own episcopal see which has always been completely favourable towards us and which is our natural protector. If they have done this, they have done it unjustly and maliciously, without seeking the opinion of the Council"). By the way he has distorted the original meaning, Rinaldi shows clearly that he did not understand Cozzano's text correctly. Moreover, he should have indicated that the words italicised by us were not Cozzano's, but his own, inserted in the text to express his own personal view.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup> L. ROCKINGER, *Briefsteller und Formelbücher*, München 1863 [anastatic repr. New York 1961], p.198, note 2; cf. also pp.463-464.

JOSÉ RUYSSCHAERT, article "Cornaro ou Corner, Cornelius", in Dictionnaire d'Histoire et de Géo-

graphie ecclésiastiques, t.XIIIe, Paris 1956.

GIUSEPPE ZIGLIANI, Raccolta di memorie per la storia della Congregazione dei Preti dell'Oratorio di S. Filippo Neri in Brescia detti della Pace, dalla loro origine nel 1550... fino ai nostri giorni, Brescia, tip. Vescovile di G. Bersi e C., 1879, vol.I, pp.118-123.

the choice: "directa Episcopo Veronensi uti proximo" - he was the nearest.

This bishop, Pietro Lippomano, had succeeded Gian Matteo Giberti (who had died in December 1543) after having occupied the see of Bergamo. Paul III had transferred him to Verona on 18 February 1544, but he had made his entry into the city of the Della Scala lords only on 26 October.<sup>44</sup>

The first of the three executors nominated to execute the Bull was therefore a person of note in the ecclesiastical world of Verona.

The other two executors were the "dignitates" most in the public eye in the Church at Brescia because they carried out the two most important capitular offices. For several years they would continue to follow closely the vicissitudes of the Company.

Aurelio Durante, the son of Girolamo, belonged to a family where there were quite a number of ecclesiastics 45 who sometimes held high positions in the Church.

His uncle Pietro, whilst still a young man, had been at the court of Alessandro Farnese. When the latter had ascended the pontifical throne, he had nominated him "datario" and had made him bishop of Termoli. Previously he had been archdeacon at Brescia, then vicar-general. He was considered to be a very honest man, learned and kind. He had died in 1539.<sup>46</sup>

But our attention is focussed on Durante, Aurelio's brother, for reasons which we will give later. Durante Duranti also had been apostolic protonotary, archdeacon, canon of Brescia, and then bishop of Alghero and later bishop of Cassano allo Jonio. Ten years after Paul III had ascended the pontifical throne, he had been created cardinal on 19 December 1544. In 1545, when the "Umbrian Legation" was set up, Cardinal Durante Duranti was sent there as "legato a latere". It was there that the news reached him that Bishop Pier Paolo Vergerio was staying at Brescia, just as the latter was about to apostatize and leave the Catholic Church. The Cardinal hastened to warn Paul III about this in a letter, while at the same time he let him know about a personal experience he had had a short time earlier: he had discovered that his own doctor, a na-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>44</sup> LORENZO TACCHELLA, *Paolo IV e la nunziatura in Polonia di Luigi Lippomano vescovo di Verona* (1555-1557). Estratto da "Miscellanea Historiae Pontificiae", vol.50, Roma 1983. GUGLIELMO EDERLE, *Dizionario bio-bibliografico dei Vescovi di Verona*, ediz. di Vita Veronese, Verona 1965.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>45</sup> PAOLO GUERRINI, La famiglia Duranti ed i suoi Vescovi, in "Brixia Sacra", Pavia, 1911, anno II, n.2, pp.85-109.

 <sup>46</sup> Ibid., pp.88-89.
 47 PASTOR, Storia, op. cit., V, p.501.

tive of Orzi (a small place in the region of Brescia), who had left unexpectedly on some excuse or other, also belonged to the heretical religion. The letter is dated: "Da Camerino, alli XI Ien.ro 1546" and expresses the Cardinal's deep concern for the integrity of the doctrine of the Church.

This is the passage which is of interest to us:

"In addition I have some letters from Brescia; my family warn me, among other things, that the unworthy bishop Vergerio is there and, with great impudence, is going round sowing these heresies everywhere, and that many are listening to him and that, if nothing is done to remedy this, he will cause a lot of damage. I beseech Your Holiness to take the steps that your prudence deems necessary so that this poison may not spread further, because it seems to me that there are many who are secretly infected, so that we will not know from whom we must protect ourselves, because *multi vestiuntur pellibus ovium, intrinsecus autem.* etc.<sup>48</sup>

"I am telling you this because when I left Rome, I was given a doctor, very learned and well-mannered, and as he was from Iorci, a fief of Brescia, I accepted him; and I never saw anything but good exterior works from him. On Christmas Day he received communion with me and the other members of my house; and on the second day of the year he asked my permission to leave, saying that he had received notice, from a man sent expressly, that one of his brothers was very ill at Bologna and that he had to go there with all speed. I gave him permission to go, making him promise to return as soon as possible. And the following day I was warned by Rome that he also *de illis est*. If it is God's will that he should return, I will gladly punish him".

Vergerio, in his turn, would later direct a violent pamphlet against Cardinal Duranti: Del Cardinal Durante che ha posto in priggione un ambascia-

dor di uno di maggiori principi dell'Imperio.50

<sup>50</sup> TACCHI VENTURI, Storia, op. cit., vol.I, parte II, Documenti, p.141, n.2.

<sup>48</sup> Mt. 7:15.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>49</sup> State Archives of Parma, Carteggio Farnesiano Estero: Camerino (1543-1563), d.108/5. "Ulterius ho lettere da Bressa da li mei, et inter cetera mi avisano che il Vergerio, indegno vescovo, si trova lì, e molto sfacciatamente va seminando de queste heresie, e che da molti li son prestate orecchie, a che, se non si li remedia, che farà molti inconvenienti. Suplico alla S.tà Vostra li piglii quello rimedio che alla prudentia sua li parerà oportuno, perché questo veneno non vada più dilatandosi, ché mi pare che ce siano de molti infetti et occulti che hormai non saperemo da chi si guardare, perché multi vestiuntur pellibus ovium, intrinsecus autem, etc.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Questo dico, perché alla mia partita de Roma mi fu dato uno medico per molto dotto e de boni costumi, quale, per essere lui da Iorci, castello de Bressa, io lo accettai, né mai ho possuto considerare se non bone opere extrinseche di lui. Et il giorno di Natale si comunicò con me e con alcun altri mei familiari, et il secondo dì de lo anno mi adomandò licentia, con dire che haveva hauto aviso per homo aposta che uno suo fratello stava malissimo in Bologna, e che era necessitato de andar con prestezza. Et io li diede licentia, con prometterme ch'el ritornaria presto; et il dì da poi hebbi aviso da Roma che ancor lui de illis est. Se Dio volesse che lui tornassi, volentieri li daria il castigo".

The Cardinal then went on to speak about the fortress which Ottavio Farnese had handed over to him and to plead on behalf of one of his brothers to be delegated as the one in charge of it. This kind of request was a typical expression of the prevailing nepotic mentality, a veritable sore within high circles in the Church, and which was particularly striking in Paul III. Duranti's letter concludes with this prayer: "I beseech you, give me your opinion about this as soon as possible so that I can send for my brother and give this satisfaction to all those of my household ...".

It is almost certain that Bishop Durante Duranti (at the time of the Bull he was not yet a cardinal) had used his good services to obtain, with as many privileges as possible undoubtedly, this Bull which his brother Aurelio must have recommended to him. But that he might have almost used extortion to obtain it or have falsified its terms,<sup>51</sup> there is nothing to support this. Even more so as Paul III, from 1537 onwards, had wisely and firmly taken in hand the reform of the Roman Curia, beginning with the Datary,<sup>52</sup> and had shown a certain intransigence in suppressing the abuses. Thus, a cousin of Durante, Vincenzo Duranti, a datary and referendary of "Grace and Justice", had been deprived of his office in 1541 because of a scandal connected with finance which had broken out in his office.<sup>53</sup>

With regard to Cardinal Duranti, Pastor does not pass any personal judgment as he has done for many others, almost as if he was an insignificant figure, too inconspicuous. Referring to the nominations of cardinals on 19 December 1544, Pastor ends the list with the names of Durante de Duranti and Tiberio Crispo and adds: "With the exception of these last two, they were all eminent men who had distinguished themselves in various ways in ecclesiastical office", citing as his source: "Ciaconius III, 688 ss.". Further on, still in the same note, he writes: "According to Massarelli" (Diarium I, ed. Merkle I, 195-196) the influence

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>51</sup> LEDÓCHOWSKA, Angela, op cit., II, pp.7-30 and 295-307, has given an explanation about the facts regarding the Bull and the Duranti family, but after having made a very careful study of these points and of the procedures used by the Roman Curia in the promulgation of the Bulls, we cannot agree with her version.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>52</sup> "Thanks to the granting of favours, dispensations, privileges, indults and benefices reserved to the Pope, this office handed over to the Curia at least 110,000 ducats a year, a sum which represented about half of the total income". PASTOR, *Storia*, *op. cit.*, V, p.116.

<sup>53</sup> GUERRINI, La famiglia Duranti, op. cit., pp.92-93.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>54</sup> PASTOR, *Storia, op. cit.*, p.482. "Ad eccezione di questi due ultimi, trattavasi per tutti d'uomini egregi, che s'erano variamente distinti in uffici ecclesiastici".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>55</sup> Angelo Massarelli, secretary of the Council of Trent, compiler of innumerable acts, indefatigable memorialist, author of numerous *Diari*. "Massarelli attribuisce all'influsso di Costanza Farnese, avida di danaro che avrebbe ingannato il Papa, l'elevazione (strana data la solita prudenza di Paolo III

of Costanza Farnese, a woman greedy for money, who had probably deceived the Pope, explains the elevation to the cardinalate, surprising in itself, given that Paul III was usually prudent in his nominations, of Durante and Crispo, who were entirely unworthy of the red hat".

Pastor confines himself to passing on these comments, but without discussing or justifying them, or without explaining the nature of the unworthiness. He has certainly not shown any particular interest in Cardi-

nal Durante in his volume on Paul III.

One thing that can be said in favour of Cardinal Durante Duranti is that when he was nominated bishop of Brescia in 1551, he immediately announced a pastoral visit of the diocese. He started with the cathedral, but did not visit further afield as he thought it was more expedient to promulgate some diocesan Constitutions. Therefore he published a booklet repeating the juridical prescriptions which had already been laid down at the time when Gian Pietro Ferretti had been vicar-general; but Durante's version is imbued with a breath of spirituality which was lacking in the former, limited sometimes to a short variant, but at other times permeating a whole passage. This can be seen by comparing in the two works the chapter entitled "De laycis non omni die communicandis".

Aurelio Durante, the Cardinal's brother, was born about 1486,<sup>58</sup> and was the eldest of five brothers and two sisters. In his 1548 "polizza d'estimo" he declared that he kept at home his sister Paola, aged 43 years, unmarried and ill.

His name appears in the list of the first councillors of the Hospital for Incurables, the seventh among those elected on 11 May 1521; on 20 May 1538 he is reported as being syndic of the hospital. His name continues to appear for a long time in the acts of the hospital and it also appears several times in the Secondo Libro Generale of the Company.

The other executor of the Bull, Donato Savallo, is also inscribed on the list of the first councillors of the Hospital for Incurables on 11 May 1521; he is the sixteenth on the list. His name will be mentioned frequently in the minutes of the Council. From his 1534 "polizza d'estimo" it can be deduced that he was born about 1490; in it he states that he is an archpriest and doctor. The following declaration, dated 1548, is

56 Constitutiones Rmi D. Durantis de Durantibus, op. cit.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>57</sup> FERRETTI, Constitutiones, op. cit., ch.XIII, "De laicis omni die non communicandis", f.[62]r-v; DURANTI, Constitutiones, op. cit., ch. "De laycis non omni die communicandis", f.6r-v.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>58</sup> PE, n.48. <sup>59</sup> PE, n.119.

in the name of "Jacomo Francesco Savallo, a member of the clergy, son of the late messer Cypriano Savallo, whose uncle, messer Donato Savallo, is responsible for presenting the declaration". Giacomo Francesco, for his part, had in his house "his unmarried sister Leonora, more than twelve years old, and his sister Caterina who is more than twelve years of age.<sup>59b</sup>

Such is the biographical information we managed to discover about the three executors of the Bull. With regard to their role, it is set out clearly in the purview of the Mandate addressed to them. This again followed a common procedure: at the request of the government of the Company, the three executors, or two, or even one, had to take steps to see that the contents of the Apostolic letter were published and that they were observed, to protect the beneficiaries from any possible opposition and threaten those unwilling to comply with the usual canonical sanctions.<sup>60</sup>

By virtue of the authority entrusted to the three executors, Aurelio Durante set in motion the canonical process in view of the official notification of the Bull to the diocesan bishop of Brescia represented by his vicar-general.

## c) The executory process

The "iter" of the Bull, from its emission to its promulgation, was rather long. But delays such as these were quite normal. The date, as we have already said, was that of the day written by the datary at the bottom of the petition and indicated when the favour requested had been granted. But then all the official procedures had to be followed: the drawing up of the minutes, the writing of the texts into the register, the transcription on to parchment of both the principal Bull and the executory Mandate, until at last the end of the curial itinerary was reached when the "frati del piombo" affixed the lead seal.

The transmission of the Bull also had its own procedure and it used to take a long time because the Bull had to be communicated to the executors.

We have already mentioned the Brief sent to the Abbess of Santa Maria di Pace. It carries the date of 2 December 1541,61 but its promulga-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>59b</sup> "Jacomo Francesco Savallo, filiol chierico fu di messer Cypriano Savallo, del qual messer Donato Savallo suo barba ha la cura, che presenta essa polizza"..."Leonora sua sorella nubile, che excede l'età de anni 12; Caterina sua sorella che excede l'età de anni 12".

<sup>61</sup> ZIGLIANI, Raccolta, op. cit., p.122.

tion took place on 23 January 1543 at the same time as the corresponding executory process, and the official intimation or "fulminazione" to the vicar-general Annibale Grisoni was carried out on 27 January that same year.<sup>62</sup>

The Bull "Regimini Universalis Ecclesiae" bears the date "anno Incarnationis MDXLIIII, quinto Idus junii, pontificatus nostri anno X". Granted therefore on 9 June 1544, it was made public on 14 April 1546 according to the normal canonical procedure. Faino gives an account of the final stages of the Bull "in loco": "Extat quoque processus conditus, et legitime canoniceque fulminatus ad publicationem, intimationem et executionem Bullae supradictae, rogatus a Io. Baptista Trappa Brixiae notario, sub die 14 Aprilis 1546 et die 29 eiusdem intimatus, traditusque Ordinario loci, ut in eodem apparet".63

The executory process <sup>64</sup> in canonical form, which was required by the procedures of the Roman Curia, was intimated on 14 April 1546 by the notarial act drawn up by the notary Giovan Battista Trappa, in the presence of Don Agostino Gentile and Don Francesco Berri, respectively canon and priest of the cathedral. The executor was Aurelio Durante, to whom Lucrezia Lodrone had presented the Bull.

The process was not a matter concerning just the diocesan ordinary and his vicar-general, or even the high-ranking ecclesiastics, but also all those who – men and women, in Brescia or elsewhere – had or might have an interest in the Company, both then and in the future: "omnibusque aliis et singulis utriusque sexus personis, tam ecclesiasticis quam secularibus in civitate et dioecesi Brixiensi ac alias ubilibet constitutis, quorum interest, intererit aut interesse poterit, quomodolibet in futurum quoque infrascriptum tangit negotium, seu tangere poterit, quibuscunque nominibus censeantur, et quacunque prefulgeant dignitate".65

This preamble was followed by the text of the executory Mandate, with the text of the principal Bull inserted in the appropriate place. On the strength of these, Durante officially gave the order to execute, without any contestation, all the measures contained in it. In case of any opposition, he brandished the threat of the canonical punishments which would be imposed according to the praxis then in force; in other words, they would be preceded by the appropriate canonical warning. These

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., pp.118 and 123.

<sup>63</sup> Regola, Brescia-Bologna 1672, p.165.

<sup>64</sup> D20.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

punishments ranged from an interdict to suspension "a divinis" and to excommunication.

The bishop of Brescia, however, was expressly left out of any of the prescribed punishments: "Vobis vero reverendissimo in Christo patri et domino, domino Episcopo Brixiensi dumtaxat excepto, cui ob reverentiam vestrae pontificalis dignitatis deferimus in hac parte, si contra praemissa, vel ipsorum aliquod feceritis, seu fieri mandaveritis, per vos vel submissas personas, publice vel occulte, directe vel indirecte, quovis quesito colore, ex nunc prout ex tunc, praedicta trium dierum canonica monitione praemissa, ingressum ecclesiae interdicimus in his scriptis...". The procedure for the imposition of punishments then followed.66

Teresa Ledóchowska translated this as follows: "To you, Very Reverend Father and Lord in Christ, Lord Bishop of Brescia, saving the respect due to your episcopal dignity, we declare that if you take any action against the contents of these documents either by yourself or through persons subject to you, publicly or secretly, directly or indirectly ... three days after being canonically warned (canonica monitione praemissa) entry to the church will by this letter be forbidden to you ...".<sup>67</sup>

It seems clear that T. Ledóchowska has misinterpreted the sense of the clause "domino Episcopo Brixiensi dumtaxat excepto", "exception made for the Bishop of Brescia" (who at that time was Cardinal Cornaro); this is why she thinks the method adopted by Durante should be contested, but he was, in fact, following the obligatory procedure.

The words: "reverendissimo in Christo patri et domino ... cui ob reverentiam vestrae pontificalis dignitatis deferimus" were addressed to Mgr Giovan Pietro Ferretti, to whom the executor had to communicate the text of the Bull and, within the limits of the situation, the canonical sanctions which even he would incur if he were to oppose its execution. The executor had done ... what he had to do.

In the "intimatio et depositio", transcribed in an appendix to the executory process, the notary himself declares that he had handed over the document "in Christo patri et domino Joanni Petro Ferreto, Dei et apostolicae Sedis gratia episcopo Milenensi in episcopatu Brixiensi suffraganeo et vicario generali".68

The emphatic and intimidating tone of the process need cause no surprise; it was the language customarily used in documents of this kind

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> LEDÓCHOWSKA, Angela, op. cit., II, pp.21-22.

<sup>68</sup> D20, "Intimatio et depositio".

and was dictated by the executory Mandate itself. Giovan Battista Trappa, public notary who was acting as scribe for the occasion, drew up the notarial instrument of this process, signed it and applied to it the seal of the reverend executor, Aurelio Durante.

The notarial archetype of this executory process still exists in the files of the notary Trappa in the State Archives of Brescia,<sup>69</sup> but the authentic original which was intimated to the vicar-general Ferretti has been lost.

Two copies of this process are in our possession; one is in the *Secondo Libro Generale* <sup>70</sup> and the other is in Faino's *Miscellanea*. <sup>71</sup> We are publishing the second one. They both reproduce the above-mentioned "intimatio et depositio" which attests that the juridical intimation had really been communicated to Ferretti by the notary Trappa in person on 29 April 1546.

At the request of Lucrezia Lodrone, in fact, the notary had gone to the chapel "solitae audientiae" of the episcopal palace and had given the vicar-general notification of the Bull. Two witnesses were present: Giovan Battista and Giorgio Urgnani. Trappa had then drawn up the act of this notification. From that moment onwards, the text of the Bull was officially in the hands of the bishop.

As far as we know, this executory process has never been published before.

## d) The concessions and the language

In his *Dichiarazione della Bolla*, Cozzano deals first of all with the "prologo" and the "supplica" before passing on to the "concessione". Once again, though, his impetuous nature, all afire with enthusiasm over the arrival of the Bull and at the same time impassioned and irritated by the circumstances, prevents him from presenting the facts clearly.

To explain the "concessione", he divides it into seven parts, beginning with the approval of the Rule, which had been the object of the request:

"Explanation of the Concession of the third principal part of the

"After having thus presented the substance of the Petition, the Holy Father opens up the Apostolic fulness of his heart to grant what could have been rightfully asked of him; in this part, he does seven things.

<sup>69</sup> ASB, Fondo Notarile, notaio Giovan Battista Trappa, file n.1770, a.1546.

<sup>70</sup> SLG, ff.31v-34v.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>71</sup> FAINO, Miscellanea, BQ, ms.K.VI.1, ff.85-93.

"Firstly, the Holy Father says that he willingly gives his consent to the request. Then he absolves the persons who govern from any impediment, should there be any, to obtaining the effect of the favour at present being conceded. Thirdly, he establishes by eternal decree the Rule and the Company. Fourthly, he grants a sanation for any faults which may have occurred. Fifthly, he gives permission to change the Constitutions which may have been made regarding the government and to make others; and again to modify the latter and to make new ones, and he confirms those made in such a way. Sixthly, none of the legacies left under certain conditions to these Virgins must go elsewhere. Seventhly, that on entering and on dying, they are always to have a Plenary Indulgence". 72

Cozzano then lays stress on the second point, namely on the formula of absolution. He thinks, in fact, that it could have been specifically requested by the members of the government upon whom an interdict had been imposed by the episcopal authority, in which case he would consider the formula to be not only invalid, but spiritually harmful.

The formula of absolution, though, was obligatory in these pontifical documents. Its aim was clear: the beneficiary might have incurred, even unknowingly, some canonical punishment which would be an obstacle to obtaining the favour granted. By virtue of the absolution from this punishment, and only from this ("ad affectum presentium dumtaxat consequendum"), the person could enjoy the favour granted.

Ignatius Loyola and his companions had also received a similar absolution: "Ignatium Praepositum et Socios ac eorum singulos a quibusvis excommunicationis, suspensionis et interdicti, aliisque ecclesiasticis sententiis, censuris et poenis, a iure vel ab homine, quavis occasione vel causa latis, si quibus quomodolibet innodati exsistunt ad effectum praesentium dumtaxat consequendum, harum serie absolventes, et absolutos fore censentes, huiusmodi supplicationibus inclinati".<sup>73</sup>

It would be the same later when Gregory XIII gave approval to the Company of St Ursula at Milan, established by Charles Borromeo with its own Rule. The Brief, dated 24 December 1582, and which begins with the same words as the Bull "Regimini Universalis Ecclesiae", says in effect: "Propterea Nos, qui votis illis, ex quibus animarum salus provenire speratur, libenter annuimus, confraternitatem praedictam, et eius singulas personas a quibusvis excommunicationis, suspensionis et interdicti, aliisque ecclesiasticis sententiis, censuris et poenis, a iure vel ab

<sup>72</sup> D24, [975r-v].

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>73</sup> PAUL III, Bull "Iniunctum nobis", 14 March 1544, in *Monumenta Ignatiana...* Serie III. S. Ignatii de Loyola Constitutiones SJ, tomus I, Monumenta Constitutionum praevia, Roma, 1934, p.84.

homine quavis occasione vel causa latis, si quibus quomodolibet innodatae existunt, ad effectum praesentium dumtaxat consequendum harum serie absolventes, ed absolutas fore censentes...".<sup>74</sup>

And we will find the same kind of language in the Bulls of approval of the monasteries of the Order of St Ursula<sup>75</sup> a century later.

The fifth point of the "concessione" also provokes a violent outburst from Cozzano. This point, in fact, is concerned with the authorisation to modify the rules then in force in the Company or to promulgate new ones, providing they were lawful and honest: "Nec non eisdem Confraternitati, illiusque modernis et pro tempore existentibus gubernatoribus et gubernatricibus, ut quecumque alia statuta et ordinationes licita et honesta, tam circa regimen et tranquillum statum Confraternitatis virginum predictarum, quam illarum numerum, qualitatem et etatem, ac alia condere, illaque, ut prefertur, condita statuta et ordinationes huiusmodi alterare et mutare ac de novo facere; quae postquam condita, alterata, mutata et de novo facta fuerint, eo ipso prefata auctoritate apostolica confirmata sint et esse censeantur, ac quascumque penas in contravenientes apponere possint, diecesani loci licentia minime requisita". 76

We found the same kind of language in the Bull of Paul III, already quoted, which confirmed the Statutes and the Ordinances for the government of the "Convertite della Carità" of Brescia: "statuta et ordinationes huiusmodi, prout illis pro tempore et rerum qualitate videbitur, mutandi, corrigendi, alterandi, et in totum tollendi, aliasque ordinationes et statuta similiter licita et honesta ac sacris Canonibus non contraria condendi; quae postquam correcta, mutata, alterata, ac de novo condita fuerint, eo ipso apostolica auctoritate confirmata sint et esse censeantur, condendi plenam et liberam eisdem auctoritate et tenore, facultatem concedimus.<sup>77</sup>

This concession, therefore, was a normal one. The Bull for the Company of Jesus said: "Ac quod quascunque inter eos Constitutiones particulare, quas ad Societatis huiusmodi finem, et Iesu Christi Domini nostri gloriam ac proximi utilitatem conformes esse iudicaverint, condere; et tam hactenus factas, quam in posterum faciendas Constitutiones ipsas, iuxta locorum et temporum ac rerum qualitatem et varietatem, mu-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>74</sup> GREGORY XIII, Brief "Regimini Universalis Ecclesiae", 24 December 1582, in Regola, Milano 1585 cit., f.23r.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>75</sup> For example, in the Bulls of approval of the monasteries of Paris (1612), Toulouse (1614), Bordeaux (1618), Lyons (1619) in *Bullae Romanorum Pontificum circa Monasteriorum Ursulinarum erectionem*, Romae, Typis Vaticanis 1903, pp.V, XIV, XXVI, XXXVI.

<sup>76</sup> D18, [f.224r].

<sup>77</sup> Bull "Regimini" cit., Reg. Vat. 1693, f. 19.

tare, alterare seu in totum cassare, et alias de novo condere possint et valeant, quae, postquam mutatae, alteratae seu de novo conditae fuerint, eo ipso apostolica auctoritate praefata confirmatae censeantur, eadem apostolica authoritate, de speciali gratia indulgemus".<sup>78</sup>

In not so many words, but with the same purpose, Gregory XIII would allow the Company of St Ursula at Milan the same possibility: "Volumus autem, ut Confraternitas praedicta iuxta regulas a Venerabili fratre nostro Archiepiscopo Mediolanensi ei constitutas, et pro tempore constituendas, regi et gubernari debeat".<sup>79</sup>

Cozzano probably did not know that concessions of this kind formed part of the praxis of the Roman Curia. He suspected the governors and lady-governors of having asked, unbeknown to the Company, for the faculty to change the rules in force and to promulgate new ones, something which would undermine the integrity of the very Rule for which the Pope's approval had been sought. He considered the imposition of the cincture as a "novelty" which infringed the prescriptions contained in the Rule, and he did not hesitate to resort to various arguments to prove the illegality of this order.

The sixth point of the "concessione" (the sixth according to Cozzano's numbering) is certainly of considerable importance from the legal point of view. In our opinion, it signifies the birth-certificate as it were of a state of life legitimately recognised, with the same status, under certain aspects, as the married state and the monastic one. The virgins of the Company were officially recognised as having the right to enter into possession of their dowry or any other such inheritance, under the same conditions as if they had entered a monastery or into marriage. It was a considerable privilege.

Gregory XIII's Brief would confirm this later: "quod virgines praedictae et earum singulae, nunc et pro tempore existentes, quaecunque legata, donationes, et dispositiones de quibusvis rebus et bonis, cuiuscunque qualitatis et quantitatis fuerint, ipsis virginibus sub conditione quod moniales fiant, seu religionem profiteantur aut nubant, per quascunque personas etiam in earum ultimis voluntatibus, etiam sub poena devolutionis aut caducitatis ad alias personas seu loca pia si contrafecerint, aut alias quomodolibet facientes, confraternitatem ipsam ingrediendo consequi, et habere valeant, et per ingressum confraternitatis praefatae testatorum voluntatibus quoad hoc satisfecisse censeantur, in

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>78</sup> Bull "Iniunctum nobis", cit., pp.84-85.

<sup>79</sup> Brief "Regimini Universalis Ecclesiae", cit., f.23v.

omnibus et per omnia, perinde ac si monasterium ingressae seu religionem professae fuissent, aut matrimonium huiusmodi contraxissent auctoritate apostolica tenore praesentium concedimus".<sup>80</sup>

The Bull of Paul III had made the Company of St Ursula an institution of pontifical right.<sup>81</sup> Henceforward the institution would be able to step out of its diocesan confines to spread, in different times and different ways, the new way of life which Angela Merici had introduced into the Church. And the Merician charisma, which later would also penetrate the traditional forms of religious life, would then enrich the original stock with new branches.

Recognising the intrinsic value and the expansion of this "Institutum Ursulinarum a Summo Pontifice Paulo III, per Bullam diei 9 Junii 1544 approbatum", the Church, at the time of Pius XII, would render a magnificent homage to St Angela's foundation, whose nature "aetate praesertim qua ipsum ortum habuit, peculiaris omnino apparuit, si prae oculis elementa saltem habeantur quibus, ex vetustissima traditione, vita religiosa in suo esse constituebatur; et nostris etiam diebus, in quibus vita perfectionis evangelicae videtur in dies modernis exigentiis conformari, S. Angela Merici, quasi inspirata divinatrix et praecursor apparet recentioris illius formae vitae perfectionis quae in Institutis Saecularibus optime configurari videtur".<sup>82</sup>

These lines recognised and proclaimed the identity of the Company of St Ursula which, in the intention of the Foundress, would provide an alternative, in no way inferior, to the religious life, provided its members lived their Rule with the dignity and fidelity of a spouse: "Filiae etenim S. Angelae optimo iure per saecula persuasum sibi habuerunt se in statu perfectionis evangelicae et religiosae consistere, per observantiam S. Regulae et Normarum seu v. 'Buoni Ordini' quae locum Constitutionum tenent, necnon per Consilia Evangelica quae per proposita in praxim deducere conabantur".

It may seem surprising that a document of such importance as the Bull of Paul III was not included with Angela's Acts of Process. But this process, as we shall see, was concerned only with her reputation for sanctity and with the testimonies of veneration paid to her both during

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., f.23r-v.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>81</sup> BATTISTA DASSA, La fondazione di S. Angela Merici come prima forma di vita consacrata a Dio nel mondo, Presentazione del P. J. BEYER SJ, Milano, Ancora 1967, p.182.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>82</sup> Decree "Vetustum et praeclarum Institutum" of the Sacred Congregation for Religious, 25 May 1958, in *Nuove Costituzioni per la Compagnia di S. Orsola figlie di S. Angela Merici*, Brescia, tip. Queriniana, 1958, pp.81-87; and see also DASSA, *La fondazione*, op. cit., pp.301-303.

her lifetime and after her death. Now Paul III's document did not make any mention of the Foundress of the Company, nor did the Rule which he approved in any way envisage a cult being paid to her; there was no reason, therefore, to take it into consideration.

Gabriele Cozzano's Dichiarazione della Bolla, on the other hand, was copied into the Acts, because in the commentaries he made, between one translation of the text and another, the Chancellor of the Company spoke at length about Angela Merici and her sanctity, thereby offering, for the purposes of the canonisation, the irrefutable evidence of an eye-witness.

#### APPENDIX NOTE

The "books" of the Company

We cannot avoid trying to reconstruct here the list of the Company's registers. Starting from 1535, they gradually increased in number to meet circumstances and new requirements. This reconstruction entailed a very thorough research and in it there are still some undocumented but very obvious gaps. Compared with previous similar attempts, however, we think that it will mark an advance.

In spite of our research, we were not able to establish with any certitude the exact date of each book. We intend here to gather together the bibliography of the origins and then to follow it through up to the period of the government under Isabetta Prato. We have drawn on various sources, but these do not fill the gap caused by the disappearance of those registers and collections of papers which constituted the basic historical patrimony of the primitive Company, and which today seem to be irreparably lost.

We will start with the one book which we still have; in it, moreover, we find four other books mentioned, and this helps us to identify certain registers among those which have different titles according to the respective sources.

- Secondo Libro Generale, the only one which has survived from all that was diligently compiled and conserved for a long time in the Archives of the Company of Brescia.

Its composition was decided upon at the Council meeting of 28 October 1572, presided over by Isabetta Prato, whose election as mother general had taken place only a week earlier. The minutes of this meeting give the information that at that time two books were already in force: a "libro ordinario" for

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Cf. supra, Pt.I, Ch.I, 3.c.

the entry of decisions, and a "libro bollato", with the inscription of all those in the Company who had exercised, were exercising or would exercise in the future some charge or office. But it was decided to introduce another two books: one would assemble together the chief documents of the Institute and those concerned with its internal organisation, and this would actually be the Secondo Libro Generale; the other book, entrusted to the notary Piazza, who prior to this had been elected to the office of agent, was intended for keeping the acts of a civil and financial nature, and this would become the "Registro di tutti gli Instrumenti...".

The three resolutions are as follows:

"I. That Antonio dalla Piazza having been promoted and elected a few days previously as agent of the said Company, the aforementioned election, carried out orally, should be confirmed, approved and entered into the ordinary book.

II. That all the governors, protectors or conservators, agents, and all other persons who are holding at present or will hold in the future any charge, office or title in this Company, and who are not inscribed in the 'libro bollato' set aside for this, should be entered in it.

III. That two books should be made; in one of them should be written the root and rules of the said Company, and in the other the instruments, wills, legacies and other covenants, in perpetuity; and the execution of this was entrusted to the above-mentioned Antonio dalla Piazza".<sup>2b</sup>

The Secondo Libro Generale is recognisable under the third heading. It hands on, in fact, "the root", in other words the life of Angela Merici and her Writings, the fundamental juridical acts such as the Bull of Paul III and the process "fulminated" for its execution.<sup>3</sup> But we do not find there that exchange of appeals to the episcopal authority, of decrees and of ordinances to which Lombardi refers,<sup>4</sup> and which had taken place during the first decades of the Company's history. It may have been thought inopportune, once peace had been restored, to hand down to posterity the testimony of this split which had inflicted such a painful wound on the new-born Company. Or maybe this documentation had been entered into an earlier "Primo Libro Generale".

The Secondo Libro Generale also contains the constitutional acts: elections,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> SLG, f.150r-v.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2b</sup> "I. Che essendo sta alli giorni passati promosso et eletto Antonio dalla Piazza per agente di detta Compagnia, che l'elettion predetta fatta in voce sia confirmata et approbata, et sia descritto nel libro ordinario.

II. Che tutti li governatori, protettori over conservatori, agenti, et ogni altra persona che havesse al presente, overo che haverà per l'avenire, alcun carico, officio over titolo in essa Compagnia, et che non fusse descritto nel libro bollato ad ciò deputato, debbano, quelli che sono di presente al servicio sudetto esser descritti, et parimente nell'avenir descriversi debbano quelli che saranno admessi ut supra.

III. Che siano fatti dui libri, sopra uno de quali siano descritti la radice et ordinationi di detta Compagnia, et nell'altro li instrumenti, testamenti, legati et altre raggioni, a perpetua memoria; et la essecution di questo fu comessa al sudetto Antonio dalla Piazza".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> SLG, ff.30r-34v.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Cf. supra, Pt.III, Ch.I, note 12.

minutes recording the admission of subjects, resolutions concerning disciplinary or structural measures, various council decisions. But the documentation which refers to certain facts prior to 1572 was copied into it several years later. We have seen, for example, that the *Testamento* is written there with some notable variations compared with the APC text; on the other hand, the Bull and the executory Process agree (apart from a few copyist errors) with notarial acts from another source. Likewise the minutes of the elections of Angela, of Isabetta Prato and of Caterina Chizzola correspond, the first with the transcription of the original which is in the APC, and the other two with their respective notarial acts.<sup>5</sup>

But there are some documents missing in it: the election and the government of Ginevra Luzzago are not mentioned; the election act of Bianca Porcellaga is not there, and there is no reference to Veronica Buzzi's resumption of office after the death of Bianca. And it is precisely these documents which are concerned with the most obscure period of the history of the Company.

Libretto d'iscrizione, inaugurated on 25 November 1535. Doneda, who had seen it, described it thus: "A small book, in quarto format; it has a white cardboard cover and on the outside there is the following inscription: '1535. 25th Day of November. In this little book are inscribed all the virgins who belong to the Company of Saint Ursula; they meet every [first] Friday for Holy Communion, and every last Sunday to listen to the reading of the Holy Rule named after Saint Ursula'. In the said book are inscribed, in the following manner, the names of all the sisters of the Company who entered there in 1535, 1536, 1537 and 1538: '1535. 25th Day of November. The Reverend Madre Suor Angela'. This is the Blessed Foundress; and her name is followed by 28 others. The same method is used for the next three years: '1536. 25th Day of November' etc.'.'.6

In the list which he presents under the letter L of his "Indice degli Autori", Lombardi entitles this book Libretto dove sono descritte le prime Orsoline accettate dalla Beata Angela, and he identifies it with the Libro primo della Compagnia.

- Libro de la Compagnia de Santa Ursula de le defunte de la Compagnia Verzene. When the biographers speak about the death of Angela, they all quote this book, always taking the same passage, the only one known to us: "The Company of St Ursula was started in 1535, in the month of November, by the Rev. Madre Sore Anzola; and then she, the Madre Sore Anzola, died on the 27th day of January of 1540. Concerning her death, she had predicted her death. Before her there died a daughter of a colonella called La Pizza; she lived at St Afra and her name was Marta. After this young girl our Madre Sore Anzola died and her death she had predicted it". 8

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Respectively: APC. Vat. 341, ff.921v-924v; ASB, Fondo Notarile, notaio Antonio Piazza, file 2596; ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> DONEDA, Vita, op. cit., p.150, n.55 (See Italian text supra Pt.II, Ch.VII, note 69).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> LOMBARDI, Vita, op. cit., pp.361-362. On p.92 he remarks, however, that he has not seen it.

<sup>8</sup> DONEDA, Vita, op. cit., p.152, n.65; LOMBARDI, Vita, op. cit., p.130. "La Compagnia de Santa Ur-

This book was also taken into consideration in the course of the Process of canonisation: on 18 May 1772, doctor utriusque juris Francesco Facconi, chancellor of the Company of St Ursula of Brescia, "exhibuit et penes acta dimisit librum quemdam oblongum, sed modicae latitudinis, continentem folia non chartulata n.102, coopertum charta crassiori coloris albi, in cuius externa facie legitur huiusmodi inscriptio: B. † Libro de la Compagnia de Santa Ursula de le defonte de la Compagnia Verzene".9

The calligraphy expert, Vincenzo Bighelli, then added his opinion: "This writing, given the inaccuracies of both the letters and the expression, seems to be the work of an inexperienced woman rather than of a man; according to the paper, the ink and the wording, [this writing] appears to belong in very fact to the middle of the sixteenth century; and I judge it to be completely trustworthy, especially as it has always been conserved with great care in the Archives of the

Ursulines".10

- Libro primo degli Atti più antichi della Compagnia di S. Orsola di Brescia, also called "Libro sigillato e autentico", as Lombardi puts it. <sup>11</sup> Doneda, though, had called it Libro primo degli Atti più antichi; he had consulted it and had found, on the back of folio 89, some information about Cardinal Borromeo's apostolic visit <sup>12</sup> (but he did not copy out this information).

This must be the *Libro bollato* to which the above-mentioned minutes of 28 October 1572 referred and which contained, and would continue to contain, the names of those who exercised any charge or office. And it must also be the *Libro bollato* which the government of the Company had introduced in 1546 and which carried the signature and the seals of Durante and Savallo. Landini also had referred to it: "a book sealed and authenticated by the Apostolic Conservators". Lombardi – as we have said – did not want it mentioned in the processes, possibly so as to not throw discredit on the Company in its early days and, indirectly, on the Foundress. 14

This is the *Libro autentico* mentioned in Chapter II of the *Regola* printed by Damiano Turlino, in one of the rare interpolations in this edition.

- Libro de' Conti della Compagnia di Sant'Orsola. It was presented at the Process

sula fu comenciata del 1535, del mese de novembrio da la Rda. Madre Sore Anzola; poi lei la Madre Sore Anzola morite a dì 27 de zenaro del 40. De la sua morte lei la predise la morte sua. Prima morite una fiola de una colonela dita la Piza, stava a S. Afra el nome jera Marta. Da poi de questa puta morite la nostra Madre Sore Anzola et la predise la sua morte".

9 APC. Vat. 341, f.868r.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> APC. Vat. 341, f.881v. "Questa scrittura, stante la scorrezzione e delle lettere e del sentimento, sembra scritto da donna imperita piuttosto che da uomo; e dalla carta, dall'inchiostro, e dal modo di esprimersi, appare appunto della metà del secolo decimo sesto e lo giudico meritevole di tutta la fede, massime che si è sempre conservato nell'archivio delle Orsoline con gran diligenza".

<sup>11</sup> LOMBARDI, Vita, op. cit., p.362.

<sup>12</sup> DONEDA, Vita, op. cit., p.168, n.92.

<sup>13</sup> D15.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Cf. supra, Pt.III, Ch.I, 1.c.

by Francesco Facconi: "Demum exhibuit, et penes acta dimisit, et alium librum in folio communi, rite compactum, coopertum crassiori charta alba, constantem ex foliis chartulatis n.104, inscriptum a foris: Libro de' Conti della Compagnia di Sant'Orsola, that is an account-book of the entries made by the Mothers and set out according to the periods, from 1561 up to 1584. Intus autem liber incipit per haec verba: I.H.S. Maria. Conto de tutti li danari... et desinit in haec alia: Per la madre Usupina folio 1º et 2º". 15

- Libro della Reverenda et quasi beata Madre Suor Angela fondatrice della Compagnia di Sant'Orsola di Brescia con le Iustificationi di essa vita, et anco si contiene il voto delle vergini di detta Regola. For reasons which we will explain, the witnesses as well as the officials of the Process would follow tradition and also call this book Libro rosso, Libro della Busta, Libro della Beata Angela. We have already mentioned it in the first part of our work<sup>16</sup> as it contains the first biography of Angela Merici. But there is a second part of this manuscript which the Acts of the Process did not take into consideration because it did not have any direct bearing on Angela as a candidate for canonisation, namely the part containing "il voto delle vergini di detta Regola".

This apparently obscure phrase means that the virgins who pronounced the vow of virginity in public between 1568 and 1600 had their names inscribed in this book, as is stated in the APC themselves: "In hoc enim libro scribere perrexerunt usque ad annum 1600 nomina earum virginum Societatis Sanctae Ursulae quae publice votum castitatis emittebant". The last name to be inscribed is that of a certain Maria Helena de Patrini.

The book, therefore, must be considered as being, to all intents and purposes, an official register of the Company, and that is why we are including it in our list.

This same manuscript had also been submitted to examination by the expert Angelo Franchi: "exhibitus fuit ipsi perito scriptori codex manuscriptus in folio coopertus corio rubro extractus ipso vidente e théca coriacea intus habens hunc titulum: Libro della vita della Reverenda...". <sup>18</sup> The manuscript, kept in a leather case, was bound in red leather. This is what made Doneda write: "The names of those virgins who made the vow are written in the *Libro Rosso* (which is also called the *Libro della B. Angela*), starting from folio 21". <sup>19</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> APC. Vat. 341, ff.868v-869r. "Demum exhibuit, et penes acta dimisit, et alium librum in folio communi, rite compactum, coopertum crassiori charta alba, constantem ex foliis chartulatis n.104, inscriptum a foris: Libro de' Conti della Compagnia di Sant'Orsola, cioè amministratione delle entrate fatta per le Madri, secondo i tempi, essistenti dal 1561 sino al 1584. Intus autem liber incipit per haec verba: I.H.S. Maria. Conto de tutti li danari... et desinit in haec alia: Per la madre Usupina folio 1º et 2º".

<sup>16</sup> Cf. supra, Pt.I, Ch.II, 1.b.

<sup>17</sup> APC. Vat. 341, f.868v.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., f.889v.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> DONEDA, Vita, op. cit., p.167, n.89. "I nomi di quelle vergini che fecero il voto sono scritti nel Libro Rosso (che chiamasi anche il Libro della B. Angela), incominciando al foglio 21".

- Registro de tutti li Instrumenti, Testamenti, Legati et altri contratti pertinenti alla Compagnia di S. Orsola di Brescia principiato dall'anno 1572 sotto la cura, et de ordine della magnifica Donna Isabetta de Prato madre generale di essa Compagnia.<sup>20</sup> This is the second register which the council had ordered at its meeting of 28 October 1572 mentioned earlier, the compilation of which had been entrusted to the notary Antonio Piazza (or Antonio dalla Piazza). It likewise had been presented at the Process by the Company's archivist, Francesco Facconi, and submitted to the calligraphy experts, since the notarial act of a legacy bequeathed to the Company by Lucrezia Lodrone had to be extracted from it. This is how it was presented: "Traditus fuit dicto perito scriptori liber in folio coopertus corio rubro, continens plura Instrumenta, testamenta etc. ad Societatem Sanctae Ursulae attinentia, cuius titulus intus expressus est huiusmodi: Questo libro si chiamarà il Registro di tutti gli Instrumenti, Testamenti etc. della Compagnia di S. Orsola di Brescia, et signanter monitus ut inspiceret Instrumentum diei 25 aprilis 1538, quo attente considerato, suum sensum aperuit in hisce verbis: Having examined carefully the Instrument of the 25th day of April 1538 drawn up by the notaries Bernardino Grosso and Gabriele Cozzalo, the copy of which is contained in the book bound in a red colour leather and which was copied into this book by Antonio dalla Piazza, notary and agent of the Company of St Ursula, I declare this copy to be trustworthy. Because, even though the said copy does not carry either the signature or the paraph of the said notary dalla Piazza, I know that this writing, which is well known to me, is truly his, and I have carefully compared it with that of other notarial acts written by him and which bear his signature and his usual paraph".21

Would this be the book to which Lombardi refers, without giving any other information, as the Libro Primo degli Atti pubblici della Compagnia di S. Or-

sola di Brescia? 22

- Primo Libro Generale. Lombardi also cites this title<sup>23</sup> among the books which were in the Archives of the Ursulines at Brescia in his day without, however, adding any explanation.

This was perhaps the Libro ordinario mentioned in the minutes of the council meeting held on 28 October 1572 and which was in use then. According to

20 APC. Vat. 341, f.874r.

22 LOMBARDI, Vita, op. cit., p.362.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p.361.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Ibid., f.889v. "Considerato attentamente da me l'Istromento del dì 25 Aprile 1538 rogato da Bernardino Grosso e Gabriele Cozzalo nodari, la di cui copia contiensi nel libro legato in pelle di color rosso, e trascritto in detto libro da Antonio dalla Piazza nodaro ed agente della Compagnia di Sant'Orsola, dico meritar questa copia tutta la fede. Imperciocché, quantunque non abbiavi in detta copia la sottoscrizzione e segno del detto nodaro dalla Piazza, so però che questo è il di lui vero e reale carattere bene a me cognito, e confrontato con diligenza con altre scritture da lui rogate, scritte e sottoscritte e segnate con il di lui solito tabellionato". The notarial act of the Lodrone legacy had been reported in the APC because it was said in it that the Company had been divinely founded by Angela: "Schola Sancte Ursule Brixie divinitus institute per venerandam dominam sororem Angelam". (APC. Vat. 341, f.925r).

the dispositions taken by Isabetta Prato, it should have furnished proof of the election, which had already taken place, of the notary Piazza as agent of the Company.<sup>24</sup>

Perhaps, too, this *Primo Libro Generale* coincides with the *Capitularium* in which the nomination of Lucrezia Lodrone, made by Angela herself and then later confirmed by the Company,<sup>25</sup> had been entered.

We are not saying anything here about the *Terzo Libro Generale* which was in the Archives of the Ursulines at Brescia at the time of the Process. It did not begin, in fact, before 1634, so it does not belong to the period of history which we are examining.<sup>26</sup>

Such an imposing set of registers shows that, from its earliest days, the Company must have enjoyed the professional services offered by lawyers and experts.

<sup>24</sup> SLG, f.150r.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Cf. supra, Pt.II, Ch.VIII, 3.b. and the notarial act (D27) of the notary Maffetti, ASB, Fondo Notarile, notaio Gio. Maria Maffetti, file 850.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> This Terzo Libro Generale, quoted in the Atti del Processo, enabled us to date the pictures in the Brescian church of St Ursula. Cf. infra, Pt.III, Ch.IV, b.

# Chapter II

## FROM DIVISION TO REUNIFICATION

For the period from the proclamation of the Bull of Paul III through the executory process fulminated on 29 April 1546, and for a whole decade, the history of the Company of St Ursula has up to now always been wrapped in silence. The archive-documents which would have made it possible to follow the most important events closely are, in fact, missing. Even if, as we have seen, the *Secondo Libro Generale* has handed down certain details about this period, for the most part it is silent about these years, probably out of reserve and discretion.

Today, however, some notarial acts enable us to break through this silence, thanks to their lists of witnesses and participants. We are now in a better position to measure the violence of the storm which shook the Company, undermining its very foundations, and leading to a split into two opposing parties, a split which lasted several years. In a climate of polemics, of antagonisms, of accusations, the Company of St Ursula, which had lived and shared with Madre Suor Angela the existential experience of the charismatic moment, arrived at the institutional phase through the crucible of fire.

But its itinerary, as we will relate in the following pages, had passed through stages different from the ones traditionally given: it was not the group in favour of the cincture which was recognised as legitimate, but the opposition party supported by Cozzano; likewise, it was Ginevra Luzzago's election after the death of Lucrezia Lodrone which was recognised as legitimate. The fact that the pontifical Legate at Venice had had to confirm the legality of this election and that this confirmation had had to be intimated by fulminating the corresponding executory process is proof of the resistance of the others, those others who formed the larger group.

In 1555, this majority party had elected Veronica Buzzi as mother general, and had then turned to Rome to obtain recognition of the secession for which they were responsible. The interrogation to which the alleged authors of this futile attempt were subjected, as well as the canonical monition against the Reverend Giovan Paolo dalla Corte, who was

thought to be their leader, enable us to foresee the risk of an irreparable division.

Events precipitated, though, and a positive solution was found: Ginevra Luzzago died in the autumn of 1558; in March 1559, Brescia acquired an authentic pastor in the person of Bishop Domenico Bollani; for the admission ceremony that year on 25 November, the Company had its new mother general, Bianca Porcellaga. Veronica Buzzi had handed over the office to her. The reunification had taken place.

### 1. THE DIFFICULT SUCCESSION

We have already said how an initial disorientation was inevitable when Lucrezia Lodrone succeeded Angela Merici and when the Company had to face its first difficulties of a psychological nature, both from within and from without. Lucrezia then had to use to the full her prestige as mother general and exert all her authority to keep a firm hand on the ranks of the Company.

## a) The first signs

We do not know how the collegial form of government which Angela had envisaged actually functioned in the early years following 1540. It is a fact that on 22 February 1545, while the crisis was slowly coming to a head but without anyone probably yet being aware of its significance, a meeting took place which must have reinforced this collegiality. It was held in the house of Countess Lodrone situated in the district of Mercato Nuovo. Chosen as witnesses were the curate of St Afra, one of the Countess' servants and a certain Fioramonte, an inhabitant of Brescia. The act was drawn up by the notary, Giovanni Maria Maffetti.<sup>2</sup>

All the virgins of the Company had been summoned to attend, on the order of Lucrezia Lodrone, who at that time was "minister, treasurer and prioress" by virtue of the authority which Angela herself had conferred on her. And this authority had been approved later by the Company, "ut in *Capitulario* sive privilegiis dicte Societatis dicitur apparere", as it is stated in the notarial act we discovered.

The 73 voters, whose names were written down in the minutes by

<sup>1</sup> Cf. supra, Pt.III, Ch.I, 1.

 <sup>&</sup>quot;Mandatum Societatis S. Ursule", ASB, Fondo Notarile, notaio Gio. Maria Maffetti, file 850; D27.
 Cf. supra, Pt.III, Ch.I, Appendix Note.

the notary, affirmed that their number exceeded the two thirds required for this meeting. The names of the matrons were not given, but this is not surprising, as the examination of the minutes of the various elections reveals, in fact, that only the virgins of the Company and the colonelle had the right to vote. Among these 73 names written down, some can be recognised among those who had elected Angela in 1537.

The reason for the summons was the election of what would be called today an administrative council, the members of which would be "procuratores, actores, deffensores et negotiorum gestores", with the following duties: "bene, recte et diligenter administrare et regulare bona et iura dicte Societatis, et omnia et singula et quecumque alia negotia occurrentia dicte Societati facere et exercere, ac si tota dicta Societas pre-

sens adesset".

And then, "omnes ... unanimes, nemine discrepante", and with no intention of revoking the administrative acts carried out by the mother general, Lucrezia Lodrone, but rather of ratifying and of approving them, and having confidence in her integrity, they proceeded to confirm Lucrezia Lodrone in the office of prioress and treasurer which she had already assumed, and to elect the following matrons: Ginevra Luzzago, Veronica Buzzi, Isabetta Prato, Leonella Pedezocca, Orsolina Gavardo, all present and willing. They were charged with the duty of representing the Company before the tribunals, ecclesiastical, civil and mixed, and of guarding its rights. And in any case involving litigation, they were to come to an agreement or a settlement, to make peace, to act in the name of the Company. They could thus receive, collect, invest money or spend it "inter pauperes dicte Societatis vel aliter, prout magis et melius expediens videbitur et placuerit...".

In short, it was a matter of competences concerning the administration of the Company's goods as such, their safeguard and their management. It was a function to be carried out in the spirit of the 9th Legacy which Angela had dictated for the matrons, with a special authoritative tone of voice: "You are to understand that if it had not been useful and suitable for this Company to possess some income, God would not have provided it in the beginning. I advise you, however, to be careful in this matter, as good and true mothers, and spend the money you have for the good and the development of the Company, as prudence and motherly love dictate to you. On this matter I do not want you to seek outside advice. Decide just among yourselves in the way that charity and the Holy Spirit will enlighten and inspire you, directing everything to the good and spiritual benefit of your daughters, in order to urge and move those that are already in the Company to greater love and the duty of doing

good as well as to attract others to the Company".4

At the same time, a curb was imposed on the decision-making power of the mother general, who was also treasurer and legal representative. This mother was Lucrezia Lodrone. The juridical act involved here constituted a mandate of procuration given by the Company to a specific group and was only valid when this group acted with the consent of the majority. Had this act been prompted perhaps by some abuse of power on the part of Lucrezia Lodrone? Or was it the logical sequence of events as the Company expanded?

This mandate of procuration voted for by the Company was only to be given to the lady-governors and not to the men who were governors. This could give rise to another question: What had happened, at that time, to the "four mature men" and their function?

The answer to this is clear when the limits to their field of action, as set out in the chapter on government in the Merician Rule, are remembered: "The four men will act as agents and fathers in the day-to-day needs of the Company". Their role was a supplementary one, when the colonelle and the matrons were unable to cope, especially in cases when the maidens were in conflict with their employers, when difficulties surfaced with the family and there was no way of settling them: "If it were to happen that any of the sisters who were orphans could not obtain their property, or any who were servants or companions or suchlike were not given their wages, or if any were in a similar plight which required a court case or an informal settlement (which would be the better solution), then the four men, out of kindness and acting as fathers, should take on the business and help them as they need".

These men, therefore, had to be agents and protectors for the defence of the rights and the interests of the Company in general or of individual members with respect to a third party; but they were not involved in the administration of its goods and of its property. Angela had been very firm about this point in the 9th Legacy: "On this matter I do not want you to seek outside advice; decide just among yourselves".

# b) The election of Veronica Buzzi

We have to wait until 14 May 1555 before finding at length another document; this is the act of Veronica Buzzi's election. We found no

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Testamento, 9th Legacy; D5.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Regola, Ch.XII; D2. <sup>6</sup> SLG, ff.54r-55r; D26.

trace, though, of either her removal or of her later replacement by Bianca Porcellaga. On the page in the *Secondo Libro Generale* where the mothers general are listed, there is the following note: "Lady Veronica Buzzi who was elected on 6 February 1569". But this would be referring to her second election (if in fact there had ever been an election ... because there is no act confirming it).

The uncertainty concerning the date of Lucrezia Lodrone's death already raises another question: How much time had elapsed between her death and Veronica Buzzi's election? What had happened in the meantime?

The minutes of this election, drawn up by the notary Giovan Francesco Galvano, do not say that it was a question of replacing the mother general who had recently died (although this is what could have happened). After having listed the names of those voting, the act goes on to say: "The which ladies say that they form two thirds of the Company and that they are meeting together in this way because at present they find themselves without mother or leader, and it is impossible for this Company to keep standing and to govern themselves according to their rule and constitutions, without mother and leader. And so that the things ordained by divine inspiration may not become devoid of all their meaning, and that these ladies may be encouraged in the observance and ordinances initiated by them, and may make progress along the road which leads to paradise, they have decided to devote this meeting to electing a mother and leader, from whom they can look forward to seeing that their rule and Company is well preserved ...".

The voting took place "in loco infirmarie infrascripte Societatis Sancte Ursule, site in civitate Brixie, in contrata Sancti Bartholomei". The counting of the votes gave the following results: Veronica Buzzi was elected after being short-listed with Isabetta Prato; Orsina Gavardo and Leonella Pedezocca had also received votes. No mention is made of either Ginevra Luzzago, even though she was one of the matrons most in the public eye at that time, or Bianca Porcellaga who, from November

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Ibid., f.40r. On f.55r, between the minutes of Veronica Buzzi's election and that of Isabetta Prato, there is the following note, probably written by Faino: "There is missing from here the instrument of the election of Lady Bianca Porcellaga 'virgin' who, about 1560, succeeded Lady Veronica Buzzi as Mother of the Company, which instrument has not been found". ("Qui manca l'instromento dell'elettione della sig.ra Bianca Porcelaga 'verg.e' che successe in Madre della Compagnia alla sig.ra Veronica Buzzi circa il 1560, quale non s'è trovato"). The title "virgin", added as an interlinear note, must have been prompted by her name being homonymous with that of Bianca her granddaughter, her son Samson's daughter, who was also a maiden of the Company.

8 D26.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

1559, would be at the head of the Company of St Ursula.10

The minutes record that the desire to retain the cincture was strongly expressed, although "before the election some of this Company had proposed abandoning it. But they are determined to see that the cincture is worn, and that everything is observed as it was at the time of the Rev. Mgr Aurelio Durante and Mgr Donato Savallo ... one-time conservators of these ladies, making reference also to the judgment and view of Mgr Agostino Gentile and Mgr Carlo Soldo ... who are the present conservators of these ladies ...".<sup>11</sup>

These two men acting as conservators, Gentile and Soldo, were not however present at the voting; but the government appealed to their authority for the retention of the cincture and probably also for some other disciplinary measures already in force (such as the one regarding the *Libro bollato* perhaps?). Those voting on 14 May had shown by their verdict that they endorsed these choices; but the public act which was drawn up to ratify it had been deferred to the opinion of the two conservators: "about these things, I, Francesco Galvano, am charged with drawing up a public instrument providing it is pleasing to the aforementioned lord conservators".<sup>12</sup>

And so, a few days later, on 23 May, a second meeting took place (this time in a room with a fireplace, on the ground floor of Isabetta Prato's house). Two witnesses were present: Andrea, the son of Giovanni Amati, and Bartolomeo Cozzano.<sup>13</sup> The six colonelle of the Company had been summoned, representing the virgins, and delegated by them "to draft imperatively the present instrument, but under the commission and order of the Rev. Mgr Carlo Soldo, conservator of the aforesaid ladies, who said that he has also had the approval of Mgr Agostino Gentile, likewise a conservator as above, about the things ordered and established above by these ladies who have approved and confirmed them and approve and confirm them, with the permission of the said Mgr Carlo and which I, the undersigned notary, have handed over to them. And they have charged me to draw up the public instrument of it".<sup>14</sup>

By virtue of his authority as conservator of the Bull, and at the request of the colonelle delegated by the Company, speaking in their own name and in that of the Company itself, Carlo Soldo ratified the decisions taken on the preceding 14 May. Both Isabetta Prato and Leonella Pedezocca were present.

Pedezocca were present

<sup>10</sup> D33.

<sup>11</sup> D26.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> We have no other information about them.

<sup>14</sup> D26

It must be assumed, though, that before these two dates of 14 and 23 May, another event had taken place, namely the election, juridically recognised, of Ginevra Luzzago as mother general.

#### 2. GINEVRA LUZZAGO

We discovered a notarial act of Girolamo Zanetti, dated 30 November 1555, <sup>15</sup> which seems to contain a proof (the first in our possession) of Ginevra Luzzago's election as mother general and principal ladygovernor. It concerns the annulment of a lease-contract with the corre-

sponding release of commitment with regard to the Company.

Recalling the payment made in 1551, the notarial act clearly refers to Ginevra Luzzago as being just a matron at that time, while Lucrezia Lodrone was the mother general: "Cum dicto anno 1551, 2° augusti, dominus Johannes Antonius de Cesarenis, notarius, civis et habitator Brixiae, tunc livellarius Confraternitatis et Societatis Sanctae Ursulae, civitatis Brixiae, libras viginti planetas singulo anno, pro affranchatione dicti livelli, solverit et numeraverit magnificae dominae Genebriae de Luzago, in presentia quondam magnificae dominae comitissae Lucretiae de Lodrono matris et gubernatricis dictae Confraternitatis, libras quattuorcentum planetas...".

In 1551, therefore, the stipulated sum had been handed over to Ginevra Luzzago, in the presence of her mother general at that particular time, Lucrezia Lodrone. By 1554 the situation had changed. The document continues: "Cumque dicto anno 1554, 8 Martii, magnificus et excellens iuris utriusque doctor dominus Johannes Antonius Rotingus, tunc dictae Confraternitatis livellarius, pro affranchatione solverit et numeraverit premissae magnificae dominae Genebriae, matri et gubernatrici et eo no-

mine agenti ut supra, libras...". (The italics are ours).

Thus, in 1551, Ginevra Luzzago collected a sum of money in the presence of Lucrezia Lodrone "madre e governatrice"; but in 1554 she collected it in her own name, described by the same title of "madre e governatrice" which had been given to Lucrezia in 1551. Had the latter already died by 1554? And had the Company, still united, then held a legitimate election and voted for Ginevra Luzzago as their superior general? There are good grounds for believing this is what happened.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> "In solutum datio magnifici domini Hieronimi de Luzago Confraternitati Sanctae Ursulae Brixiae, cum liberationibus", ASB, Fondo Notarile, notaio Girolamo Zanetti, file 1694.

But Ginevra Luzzago, who had probably tried to restore to the letter the Rule and provisions made by Angela, must have come up against opposition from the other matrons. Certainly Veronica Buzzi, Isabetta Prato, Orsina Gavardo and Leonella Pedezocca, the four among whom the votes would be divided at Veronica Buzzi's election in May 1555, were not in agreement with Ginevra.

Ginevra's act of election had probably been entered in the *Primo Libro Generale* which is lost today. But the election – a legitimate one from the canonical point of view – had certainly taken place. This is

proved by the documents 30 and 31 which we are publishing.

We have another piece of clear evidence: while 57 cast their vote in Veronica Buzzi's election on 14 May 1555 (some by proxy), 36 others, headed by Ginevra Luzzago, voted (either in person or by proxy) on 23 November of the same year for the nomination of the agents and procurators of the Company.<sup>16</sup>

Let us say immediately that the "cincture group" (simply to distinguish it) was the larger group; certainly it could count on a stronger government, composed as it was of three matrons in addition to Veronica Buzzi. It seems, on the other hand, that the other much smaller group could count only on Ginevra Luzzago, and so they found they had to reconstitute a new governing body, armed with powers laid down by the *Regola* itself. Therefore, on 23 November 1555, the abovementioned election of the agents and procurators took place. We know about the notarial act drawn up by Girolamo Zanetti with regard to this assembly, gathered together round the "magnifica matrona domina Genebria de Luzago, generalis gubernatrix, administratrix et mater", in a room on the top floor of her house.<sup>17</sup>

Judging it to be opportune and necessary for the Company "iuxta eius Regulam ad occurrentes necessitates de quorum probis hominibus providere, protectoresque ipsius idoneos, pro conservatione Confraternitatis et Societatis praedictae et jurium sororum manutentione habere, unanimiter et concorditer, Deoque inspirante, et habita matura consideratione ac informatione de probitate et integritate infrascriptorum omnium..., faciunt, constituunt, eligunt et deputant earum et dictae Confraternitatis, iuxtaque eius regulam praedictam, procuratores, agentes, actores et deffensores et patres ad occurrentes necessitates praedictum domi-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> "Electio pro Confraternitate Sanctae Ursulae Brixiae", ASB, Fondo Notarile, notaio Girolamo Zanetti, file 1694; D28.
<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

num Gabrielem de Cocialibus... et Julium Baltheum, notarios, cives et habitatores Brixiae... nec non et dominum Jovitam de Bonis notarium, et dominum Hieronimum de Girardettis...".

They nominated as protectors, "idoneos pro conservatione Confraternitatis", "magnificum dominum Johannem Mariam de Pischeriis, magnificum equitem dominum Marcum Antonium de Mauris, et magnificum dominum Hieronimum de Luzagis".

The Company under Ginevra Luzzago's guidance thus had its four agents and three protectors, but we did not discover any information about the colonelle or other matrons.

The minutes of this election help us to recognise from among the 36 voters, 12 virgins who had participated in Angela's election in 1537. Mention is also made of a certain Graziosa Mangano who had been one of the voters at the election of Veronica Buzzi and had afterwards joined (or rejoined?) Ginevra Luzzago's group.

At Veronica Buzzi's election, on the other hand, out of the 57 vot-

ers there were only 5 among those who had elected Angela.

Thanks to the notarial acts of these two elections, <sup>18</sup> we know the names of 93 members of the Company in 1555. We do not know who the others were, absent for some reason.

As for the other members of government of Veronica Buzzi's group, the notarial act of Simone Sospiri, dated 31 May 1558,<sup>19</sup> will give us the names of those whom the notary himself describes as "pretensos Dominos gubernatores", or, at least, three of them; these "so-called governors" were Gabriele Belasio, Antonio Matteo de Molis (or de Moris), and a certain Giuliano.

In the act of 31 July 1558<sup>20</sup> we can discern the same note of reservation, not only with regard to the governors, but to the entire Company governed by Veronica Buzzi: "reverendo domino Johanne Paulo de Curte, canonico Ecclesie Brixiensis... gubernatore asserte Societatis Sancte Ursule Brixie, se gerente – ut dicitur – commissario seu exequtore ellecto et assumpto". This "so-called" Company would not therefore have the backing of legality.

In spite of this, though, once the reunification has taken place, we will find in the *Secondo Libro Generale* the name of Gabriele Bellaso among the protectors,<sup>21</sup> and those of Antonio Matteo "di Mori" and "Zi-

21 SLG, f.40r.

<sup>18</sup> D26 and D28.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> ASB, Fondo Notarile, notaio Simone Sospiri, file 1127, 31 May 1558; D30.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> ASB, Fondo Notarile, notaio Girolamo Zanetti, file 1694, 31 July 1558; D31.

liano Lombardo" among the agents,22 but the names of Gabriele Cozzano and of the other governors of the Luzzago group will have disappeared from the lists by then.

In the act of election of the agents and procurators of the Company under the government of Ginevra Luzzago, there is no direct reference to the disputes that were going on; mention is just made of the intention to select men suitable for "occurrentes necessitates", in order to ensure the continuance of the Company and to defend the rights of its members.

But when the Luzzago group met again officially on 18 September 1556,23 the atmosphere all around had already become explosive, and the power of attorney entrusted to Cozzano would include more precise duties.

### b) The canonical confirmation

Two documents throw light on the legality of the government of Ginevra Luzzago, a legitimate superior who was strongly contested and rejected by one section of the Company; she was accused of interfering and of abusing her power, but at the same time she was defended by the papal Representative at Venice. The documents in question are two notarial acts dated respectively 31 May and 31 July 1558, drawn up by two different notaries, Simone Sospiro<sup>24</sup> and Girolamo Zanetti.<sup>25</sup>

Thanks to the contents of these two acts, we can attempt to piece together the sequence of events, even though there still remain some

serious gaps.

On 16 September 1555, the Apostolic Legate at Venice had issued a letter confirming the election of Ginevra as the legitimate superior of the Company at Brescia, and had supported it with an executorial document.26

The notarial act does not give any details about the canonical form of this "lettera del reverendissimo signore Legato Apostolico in Venezia" which was in the possession of the virgins of the Company and which they had shown to the friar Andrea Cattaneo, executor of the process: "pro parte puellarum Societatis Sancte Ursule Brixie, nobis presentate fuerunt littere confirmationis ellectionis magnifice domine Genebrie

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., f.50r.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> "Procura pro Societate Sanctae Ursulae", ASB, Fondo Notarile, notaio Girolamo Zanetti, file 1694; D29.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> D30. <sup>25</sup> D31.

Luciagi in matrem et gubernatricem generalem antedicte Societatis, concesse per reverendissimum dominum tunc Legatum Appostolicum Venetiis comorantem...". This is the only evidence we discovered about the confirmation.

The publication of the documents of the Nunciature at Venice by Franco Gaeta<sup>27</sup> stops at 14 July 1554; it is resumed by Aldo Stella,<sup>28</sup> beginning in March 1566. This gap between the two series of publications certainly does not facilitate the search for and the consultation of the documents issued by the Venetian Nunciature during this decade. Up to now we have not discovered any letter referring to this affair in the Vatican Secret Archives.

On 1 December 1555, the Brescian notary Ludovico Urgnano countersigned an executory process, and Vincenzo de Bonis, by virtue of the executorial mandate which accompanied the Legate's "letter", gave official notification of it on the same day to Canon Giovan Paolo dalla Corte.29 On this date, therefore, the legitimacy of Ginevra Luzzago's government was officially recognised; once the executorial mandate came into force, the exercise of her authority became more incontestable than ever.

But Canon Giovan Paolo dalla Corte, so it seems, had taken no notice of it and continued to oppose Ginevra Luzzago and the Company under her government. It is not clear, incidentally, what role he played at that time vis-à-vis the illegitimate group of Veronica Buzzi.

What is known, though, is that this group, supported by some of the first matrons and backed by a good number of "puellae", in other words the virgins of the Company, tried to appeal to Rome, using as their intermediaries their own defenders mentioned above, Bellasio, de Molis and the otherwise unknown Juliano.30 They had asked for a Brief or an Apostolic Letter,31 accusing Ginevra Luzzago in the meantime "of falsely boasting that she is the mother and lady-governor of this Company in order to find some pretext to keep for herself some of the Company's goods which had come into her hands".32 They had suggested the bishop of Termoli and the Reverend David Odasio and Giovan Paolo

1569), Istituto Storico Italiano per l'Età moderna e contemporanea, Roma 1963.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> FRANCO GAETA, Fonti per la Storia d'Italia, Nunziatura di Venezia, vol.VI (2 gennaio 1532-14 luglio 1554), Istituto Storico Italiano per l'Età moderna e contemporanea, Roma 1967. ALDO STELLA, Fonti per la Storia d'Italia, Nunziatura di Venezia, vol.VIII (marzo 1566-marzo

<sup>30</sup> Cf. supra, 2.a; infra, 3.

<sup>31</sup> D30.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

dalla Corte<sup>33</sup> as executors for the pontifical document when it arrived.

Some indiscretion, perhaps, or some direct allusion, alerted Ginevra and the Company to the danger. Afraid that such an accusation might find favour with the Holy See, the legitimate Company made arrangements for Gabriele Cozzano to be given a wider mandate of proxy.<sup>34</sup>

The decision was taken on 18 September 1556. Having named Cozzano "verum nuntium missum et legitimum procuratorem ac syndicum generalem et specialem", the Company conferred on him the charge – in the phraseology customarily used in such situations – of undertaking its defence in lawsuits, disputes, cases civil, criminal, spiritual and mixed; present and future; against third parties, whether they be individual persons or associated groups; of producing the necessary documentation at a legal session, whether ecclesiastical or secular, even before conservators, executors and assistant-executors.

This last reference to "conservators, executors and assistant-executors" takes on its full significance when one considers that the "conservators" had been asked to ratify the decisions taken by the chapter of election of Veronica Buzzi, only nine days after her election." Thus, in the eyes of her group, the "conservators" had already become an institutional figure.

But the terms "executors and assistant-executors" can also be taken to refer to the ecclesiastics who would eventually have the task of publishing the pontifical document, expected any day, and of seeing it was carried out.

In order to confer this wide mandate on Cozzano, 36 members of the Company had voted; among them was a "domina Maria novitia alumna magnificae comitissae Barbarae Sfortiae a Mediolano", thus a lady-companion of Barbara Sforza.<sup>36</sup>

It is not clear what Veronica Buzzi, her group and their three mediators were able to obtain. It was probably a Brief, but the document drawn up by the notary Simone Sospiri is very vague on the subject.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> Vincenzo Durante, bishop of Termoli, became vicar-general of Brescia in 1555 and kept this office until the arrival of Bishop Bollani, the Chapter having confirmed him as capitular-vicar during the vacancy. (Cf. GUERRINI, *La Famiglia, op. cit.*, p.93). <sup>34</sup> D29.

<sup>35</sup> SLG, ff.54v-55r.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> We found some information about a Barbara Bargnani, widow of Count Alessandro Sforza da Borgonovo Piacentino who, in 1568, lived in Brescia with her brother Giovan Paolo; she had in her service "una donzella cum salario all'anno de lire 20". PE, n.164, under the name of Barbara Bargnana.

<sup>37</sup> D30.

At the request of Giulio Balteo, the notary Sospiri, accompanied by two witnesses, assisted on 31 May 1558 at a true and proper interrogation of the three presumed petitioners, to find out who was responsible for asking for the pontifical document and for formulating the accusations against Ginevra Luzzago. The three men interrogated were very evasive in their replies.

In the minutes the notary wrote: "accessi... ad infrascriptos pretensos dominos gubernatores"; Giulio Balteo, in his role of examiner, interrogated first Gabriele Bellasi: "I have come to seek out Your Excellency on behalf of the magnificent Lady Genebria, mother and lady-governor of the Company of St Ursula, on account of a Brief, or Bull or letters, requested, so it would seem, at the instance of the spokesmen and governors and lady-governors of this Company, and addressed to the very reverend monsignor Bishop of Termoli and to the reverend monsignors David Odasio and Giovan Paolo dalla Corte, in which it is asserted that the said Lady Genebria has falsely boasted that she is the mother and lady-governor of the Company in order to find some pretext to enable her to keep for herself some of the Company's goods which have come into her hands. And many other things have been expressed in these Letters or Brief; and I desire to know if Your Excellency intervened to get these Letters or Brief sent, and in particular whether Your Excellency arranged for the above-mentioned expressions to be written in them".

To which Gabriele Bellasi replied: "The Brief has been requested at our instance, so that the decisions taken following the dispute in the Company may be effectively carried out, but with regard to these partic-

ular expressions, I know nothing about them".

It was a Brief, therefore, requested by Veronica Buzzi's group and supported by its protectors and agents, but Bellasio denied having accused Ginevra Luzzago.

Antonio Matteo de Moli, "so-called" governor, denied having seen the petition and of having commissioned it; he said that he had not been informed about the accusations levied against Ginevra Luzzago.

As for Juliano, he refused to answer.

We note that there is one name missing from this notarial act: Gabriele Cozzano's name does not feature among the principals; he had probably died before this date of 31 May 1558.

Two months later, on 31 July 1558, Canon Giovan Paolo dalla Corte was issued with a monition because of his reluctance to recognise the legitimacy of Ginevra Luzzago's government. The corresponding notarial act was drawn up by Girolamo Zanetti.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>38</sup> D31.

In the presence of two witnesses, Giovan Giacomo Vasiano of Salò, 39 "ad instantiam magnifice domine Genebrie de Luciaghis, matris et gubernatricis puellarum Societatis Sancte Ursule Brixie, ac puellarum et Societatis predicte", presented the Reverend Giovan Paolo dalla Corte with a copy of a monition which was in the possession of Zanetti himself. It had been drawn up by the provost of S. Marino, Bro. Andrea Cattaneo of the Order of Humiliati of Crema, in his time assistant-executor of the official notification of the process to the same dalla Corte, by which the document confirming the Luzzago election had been executed. The text of the monition had been collated by the notary Domenico Dro of Crema, on 23 July 1558.

The monition did not contain the text of the process fulminated on 1 December 1555 "ob illius prolixitatem", but Giovan Giacomo Vasiano handed over a copy of it to the recipient, governor of the "so-called" Company of St Ursula, and to the other governors, conservators and executors, whatever their role or authority. He told them that he had seen the letter confirming the election of Ginevra Luzzago delivered by the Apostolic Legate at Venice (16 September 1555); he recalled the process fulminated by the executor Vincenzo de Boni and signed by the notary Ludovico Urgnano; and he said that he was ready to take action since dalla Corte did not cease "ipsam magnificam dominam Genebriam et puellas dicte Societatis molestare et inquietare, non permittendo ipsas quiete et pacifice, ut convenit, dicta ellectione et bonorum administratione ac dictarum litterarum apostolicarum beneficiis uti et gaudere", and he accused dalla Corte of acting in this way "pretextu cuiusdam asserte conservatorie seu exequtionis".

Earnestly requested by those who had unjustly been oppressed to undertake their defence, Bro. Andrea stated his own position: "nos volentes, ut nostro incumbit officio, pro viribus taliter insistere ut ipsa magnifica domina Genebria et puelle dictarum litterarum beneficio utantur et pacifice gaudeant, et a quibusque molestatoribus conserventur".

The intimation then followed "in virtute sancte obedientie et sub excommunicationis pena", and also under pain of having to pay out 300 gold ducats for the army which Venice had levied against the Turks. In the case of continued opposition, the executor would inflict further punishments.

In the documents we consulted no further information is to be found about the subsequent fate of these canonical interventions.

<sup>39</sup> He had married Lucia, Ginevra's daughter.

One fact is certain: even though Ginevra Luzzago had had her legitimacy recognised, in the *Secondo Libro Generale* her name was listed only among the matrons, and was not put in the list of the mothers and lady-governors. 40 Gabriele Cozzano is not even mentioned there, nor are the other agents and protectors elected with him, 41 the only exception being Girolamo Luzzago, who is included there among the protectors.

With them closed a painful page of the Company's history, a page which had probably been committed to the *Primo Libro Generale*, and so

was lost with it.

#### 3. THE RECONCILIATION

On 18 September 1558, Ginevra Luzzago dictated her last will and testament.<sup>42</sup> The inheritance which she left to the Company as a whole and to some individual members could be obtained only on the condition, repeated five times in her will, that the members continue with perseverance to frequent the church of St Afra, that they receive the sacraments and listen to the reading of the Rule there.<sup>43</sup>

Ginevra probably died soon after she had drawn up her will. We can deduce this from the following fact: f.100 of the Secondo Libro Generale marks the beginning of the lists of the virgins admitted, from 25 November 1558 onwards; in the first list, which contains the names of 78 virgins from different places of origin, there are 7 who already belonged to the Company which had been governed by Ginevra Luzzago. The fact that these 7 virgins are listed here suggests that their Mother had already died. With regard to the others, 45 appear here for the first time, while 26 had been listed among those who had voted at the election of Veronica Buzzi in the corresponding notarial act of 1555. Three of them, Angela da Serli, Margarita della Rima, Maria di Bartolino da Leno, were already colonelle by that time, and yet they have been included in the 1558 list. However, the name of Cecilia Albrici, who had voted in Angela's day and had been present at the annulment of a lease-contract on behalf of the Company on 19 November 1559,44 does not feature here.

In the same notarial act of 19 November 1559, we meet the names

<sup>40</sup> SLG, respectively on ff.42r and 40r.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup> D28.

<sup>42</sup> D32.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup> St Afra must have been, for the Luzzago group, the "particular church" referred to in the chapter on confession in the Regola.

<sup>44</sup> D33.

of three virgins who had taken part in Veronica Buzzi's election: Andreana da Rumano, Maria Martinelli and Isabetta da Capriolo, and yet

they do not appear in any of the admission lists.

This inconsistency in the compilation of the various lists in the Secondo Libro Generale, especially the first one, makes it difficult for us to understand the methods and the scope of the reunification.

Let us examine three sources which refer to the revival of the Company:

- Francesco Landini, in a letter already quoted, attributes it to the action of Father Francesco Cabrino d'Alfianello who had become "head" of the Company (Landini should have said "spiritual father" because at that time there was no clerical "head" or superior in the Company).

According to Landini, especially from that time onwards, the Company had become "more beautiful, bigger and more glorious". Indeed, the Secondo Libro Generale registers 20 admissions in 1559; 10 in 1560; 16 in 1561; 8 in 1562; 2 in 1563; 8 in 1564; 7 in 1565. The acceptance ceremony took place regularly every year on 25 November.

- Gian Battista Saraceno affirms that, sixteen years after the death of the Foundress and at the suggestion of a Dominican, the lady-governors of the Company had asked the ordinary if they could have Father Cabrino as their "father general". The latter, "having consented to take in hand the government of these virgins, added almost immediately to the Company sixty young girls under his spiritual direction; and with this new aggregation, the Company began to grow not only in number but also in virtue, thanks to the fervour of the new-comers ...".45
- Maurizio Luzzari also relates that a certain Father Silvestro, a Dominican, had suggested that the lady-governors ask for Father Cabrino as their "father general", and the latter, "having consented to take over the government of these virgins, added to the Company some hundred others, sixty of whom were under his spiritual direction. And on 25 November ... of that same year 1560, the first of his government, he added another ten ...".46

46 MAURIZIO LUZZARI, priest of the same Congregation, Vite del Venerabile padre Francesco Cabrino fondatore della Congregatione de Preti Secolari della Pace in Brescia hora dell'Oratorio di S. Filippo Neri e di alcuni altri Padri di essa, Brescia, Archivio dei Filippini, F/5/1, ms. pp.73-74. "Accettato il governo di dette Vergini, subito aggregò alla Compagnia loro circa cento putte, sessanta delle quali erano sue

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>45</sup> GIAN BATTISTA SARACENO, Memorie delle azzioni e morte d'alcuni Padri della Congregatione di Brescia. Estratte dall'Istorie manoscritte della stessa Congregatione, Brescia, Archivio dei Filippini, G/76 ms; p.20. "Accettato il governo, aggregò quasi subito a quella Compagnia sessanta giovani, sue figliole spirituali; per la qual nova aggregatione non solamente s'aumentò il numero della detta Compagnia, ma s'acrebbe anco lo spirito col fervore di queste...".

The three authors quoted above all belong to the Congregation of the Fathers of the Oratory or of Peace, the same one as Father Cabrino. Their testimonies agree with regard to Father Cabrino's entry on the scene, but their chronology (Landini – no date, Saraceno 1556, Luzzari 1560) and the number added do not tally with those in the Secondo Libro Generale.

Faino discovered in the *Libro rosso* that "in 1560 the reverend father Don Francesco Cabrino d'Alfianello was elected Father of the Company".<sup>47</sup> If Father Cabrino undertook the charge of spiritual father in 1560, it is even harder to understand the composition of the list of 78 names in 1558.

The initial recruitment attributed to Father Cabrino must therefore be reduced to a more modest size, especially if the information we found about the origin of these 78 members is taken into consideration. It is true, nevertheless, that in the years that followed, an increasing number of members of the Company of St Ursula was registered.<sup>48</sup>

The "spiritual director for all" could have therefore played some role in the reunification. But one question had to be resolved, that of the mother general. There were obvious reasons why Veronica Buzzi, who had been elected by only one group (moreover, a group which appeared to have broken away), could not continue as superior general of a Company to which those who had joined the Luzzago group might want to return.

A compromise solution was found by electing as head of the Company Bianca Porcellaga, whose election is not mentioned in any of the acts. Her name had not even appeared among those of the matrons, and this suggests that, given the circumstances, it was judged more expedient to choose a person about whose neutrality there could be no doubt.

Unless Bianca Porcellaga had already succeeded Ginevra Luzzago as legitimate mother and lady-governor of the Company and continued as

figliole spirituali. Et alli 25 di novembre... dell'istesso anno 1560, primo del suo governo, ne aggregò dieci altre...".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup> Cf. infra, Ch.III, 1.c. "dal 1560 fu eletto Padre della Compagnia il reverendo don padre Francesco Cabrino d'Alfianello".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>48</sup> According to the *Secondo Libro Generale*, the recruitment was as follows: 6 members in 1566; 7 in 1567; 9 in 1568; 7 in 1569; plus Aurelia di Colosini, admitted on 4 July 1570 "per esser propinqua alla morte"; 13 in 1570; 16 in 1571; 16 in 1572, including "Catherina di Bonvicini", against whose name someone has later added in a different hand "daughter of the painter Moretto"; 16 in 1573 (a maiden from the orphanage of the Pietà appears for the first time); 16 in 1574; 14 in 1575; 39 between 1578 and 1579 ("sendo scorsi li anni 1576-1577 per la horribile peste che regnò in Brescia il detto anno 1577"); 23 "coronate per l'Ill.mo et R.mo sig. Card. Borromeo arcivescovo di Milano et visitatore apostolico, in Duomo", in 1580.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>49</sup> This is the exact title. Cf. Regola, Chapter on Confession.

such even after the reconciliation ... We know very little about her. If the "polizza d'estimo" which we discovered is really that of her family, as we have good reason to believe, Bianca was 73 years old in 1568 (the year of the declaration). She was a widow, but it is not said of whom. She appears in the "polizza" of Galeazzo Porcellaga and his brothers, the sons of her late son Samson. The composition of the family is given as follows: "Lady Biancha, our grand-mother of 73 years; Veronica, our mother of 43; I, Galeazzo, aged 20; Carlo 17; Giuffredo 16; Giulia and Biancha, single". 50

"Lady Biancha di Porcellagi" has her place in the Secondo Libro Generale; her name appears in the list of mothers and lady-governors of the Company<sup>51</sup> and she is also mentioned in the note already cited, in which

it is said that she had become mother general "about 1560".52

But we know that she was already superior in November 1559, thanks to the notarial act of 19 November, drawn up in the room on the top floor of the Prato house,<sup>53</sup> for the annulment of a lease-contract which Girolamo Luzzago was carrying out on behalf of the Company. Among those present were Giacomo Chizzola, protector of the Company, Antonio Matteo de Mori and Giuliano Lombardi, in their role as governors of the Company, once the subject of the inquiry of Bro. Andrea Cattaneo. The "magnifica domina Blancha de Portulachis, mater et gubernatrix" was surrounded by the matrons Veronica Buzzi, Isabetta Prato, Leonella Pedezocca and Natività Bargnani (Isabetta Prato and Natività Bargnani in their turn would become mothers and ladygovernors). The members present numbered 64.

In 1568, Bianca Porcellaga, still in charge, was the first to be listed among the recipients of Giovan Battista Nazari's *Vita* of Angela. She died in January 1569. On 6 February, Veronica Buzzi<sup>54</sup> succeeded her, taking up again the reins of government which she once had had to hand

over to her.

Later on, on 6 June 1674, another Bianca Porcellaga, the daughter of her son Samson, would enter the Company at the same time as her sister Giulia. She would be received in the chapter of 16 August 1574 and finally accepted on 25 November 1575.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>50</sup> PE, n.110. "Madona Biancha nostra avia de anni 73; Veronica nostra madre, a.43; io Galeazzo a.20; Carlo 17; Giuffredo 16, Giulia et Biancha, nubili".

<sup>51</sup> SLG, f.42r.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., f.55r.

<sup>53</sup> D33.

<sup>54</sup> SLG £ 40r

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., respectively on ff.155v, 156r, 103v.

# Chapter III BETWEEN INSTITUTION AND REFORM

The reunification of the Company ushered in a period of intense renewal, almost as if everyone wanted to make up for the years lost. The transition from the charismatic phase to the institutional one had coincided with a difficult process of maturation, during which time the Company had experienced both its own frailty and its own ability to recover.

Now that the contentions and disputes appeared to have settled down, the time seemed opportune to move towards a certain codification in order to avoid future discord, and towards some far-reaching initiatives in order to safeguard and test the newly-won stability. The twenty years which followed, with their interweaving of various human and ecclesiastical events, would see the setting-up of a structural framework destined to last for several centuries. We will point out some of the most significant aspects and events of this period.

#### 1. THE CHIEF INITIATIVES

From the numerical point of view, the Company gained yearly in strength. It must not be underestimated, though, that it had had to pull itself together after a painful trial, the memories of which must have been somewhat disillusioned and bitter. The publication of the first works for the Company's own use, a strengthening of its structures by means of organs of government, and other more subtly penetrating measures, appear to have been effective means of renewal. The ladygovernors did not hesitate to make use of them.

The first event destined to arouse enthusiasm was no doubt the "Processo Nazari", prelude and foundation of the first biography which was meant to hand down the real face of the Foundress to generations of newcomers to the Company.

We have already mentioned Nazari several times; we have already presented the four witnesses whose depositions, under oath, would form the basis of the *Vita*; we will add further details in the chapter on the processes of Angela's beatification and canonisation. Let us just say at this stage that the *Vita* was dedicated "alle nobili matrone le signore Bianca Porcelaga, Veronica Butia, Isabetta Prata, Leonella Pedezocha, Natività Bargnana, Camilla Tayetta, Giulia et Laura Trusse, et Lucretia Offlaga, rettrici et governatrici della Regola di Santa Orsola di Brescia". Up to now unpublished in its original version, we are publishing this *Vita* as D17.

### a) The printing of the Rule

When the general interest of the members in the Mother of them all had been revived, the government of the Company took steps to get the first edition of the Regola printed by the publisher Damiano Turlino.<sup>2</sup> In giving it to the printer – almost certainly in 1569<sup>3</sup> – the government of Bianca Porcellaga and the second one of Veronica Buzzi seem to have followed faithfully the line traced out by Angela. This is proved by the sparse number of interpolations in the printed text when it is compared with the manuscript in the Biblioteca Trivulziana; the synopsis which we give in D3 makes this clear.

The specific vocabulary and terminology have remained unchanged; the prescriptions are the same, with the exception of those concerning the cincture and the three stages for the admission of subjects; the government functions in the same way. Only the spelling must have been brought up to date, because certain archaisms, such as we meet in the Ricordi, the Testamento and the Trivulzian manuscript, have disappeared.

# b) The Company vis-à-vis the "law"

The Episcopal Archives at Brescia contain a document of incontestable importance and of great interest: a notarial copy of the Bull of Paul III, duly authenticated and validated so that in the eyes of the civil authority it would have the same value as the original. This copy was the fruit of an initiative taken by Veronica Buzzi so that the Company could enjoy to the full its legal rights even when faced with the common law.

We have tried to set this notarial document within its context, and the following seems to us to be the correct sequence of events.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> D17, [f.927v]. Bighelli states: "At the time of our ancestors, some manuscript copies of it appeared in public". (Cf. supra, Pt.I, Ch.II, 1.b.).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Cf. supra, Pt.I, Ch.I, 3.a; infra, Ch.V, 1.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> AV, Sezione Religiosi, busta 27, fasc.2; D21.

Following the usual procedure, the superior of the Company at that particular time, who happened to be Veronica Buzzi, had turned to the Curia, requesting a copy of the Bull which was in her possession. This was on 11 August 1570. The vicar-general was Mgr Ludovico Arrivabene, and he must have been the one who received from Veronica Buzzi the original of the executory Bull of Paul III, kept in the Archives of the Company.

After the integrity of the Bull, together with the writing and the seal, had been verified, the text was copied out in full, including the "commissio" of the "executio" which invested the "conservators" with the right and the duty to make it known and to see that it was carried

out.

The transcription having been checked "de verbo ad verbum", the bishop's seal (paper on wax) was applied in front of the witnesses, the notaries Girolamo Mainacia and Giulio Aquila. The transcription was thus authenticated.

Immediately afterwards, the notary Vincenzo Scalvini, the bishop's chancellor who had copied the original, had endorsed it by adding his own signature, his notarial paraph and the Curial seal, as proof and evidence of the veracity of the document delivered.

At this point, the document then received the attestation of Scalvini's membership of the college of notaries, delivered in the name of the Commune of Brescia by Mario Trussi as a municipal functionary, and bearing the Commune's seal (paper on wax).

Neither Veronica Buzzi nor the notaries gave any indication concerning to what use the authenticated copy of the Bull would be put, but attention must be drawn to the title under which the notarial act was catalogued: "Privilegia Virginum". This is a title which shifts the interest away from the formality of the act and from its specific end – a simple authentification – to the contents of the authenticated document and, more precisely, to the privileges granted to the Company, as for example, the power to introduce changes in the disciplinary rules, or again – a fact even more encouraging in some ways – the faculty by which the members were allowed to take possession of their dowries, legacies and inheritances to which they would have been entitled if they had got married or entered a convent.

This was perhaps the legal implication of the Bull most difficult to make the interested families understand and accept. The case must have happened frequently when this right to enter into ownership of certain goods was completely ignored, on the pretext that, not having embraced a canonical state of life, the virgin had forfeited such a right.

We think that a typical case is that of the two sisters Paola and Laura Peschera, daughters of the late Doctor Gian Piero. They were both members of the Company, at least from 1558, the year in which the reunification is assumed to have taken place.5 We possess their "polizza d'estimo" for 1568.6 They were then aged 55 and 52 years respectively, and were living a very modest life in the house of their sister Giulia, widow of Giacomo Antonio de Villi, but separately from her. They had never succeeded in obtaining their rightful share of the inheritance, which had gone to their nephews, nor the legacy which should have come to them from their uncle Gian Piero Cazzago on the condition that they married or entered a monastery. The dispute had been brought before the tribunal at Venice, but the two sisters were reluctant to plead their case. They revealed, however, their precarious economic situation: "We claim to be entitled to receive from our nephews, the heirs of the late Girolamo Peschera, the money of our dowries, a sum equivalent to what was given by our late brothers and mother to our sister Giulia, namely 3000 lire; and in addition, the share of the maternal dowry to which we are entitled. But we do not hold out much hope for it, because we are not capable of pleading our cause, and the case about it is being held at Venice. We wish also to declare another legacy which our late uncle, Gio. Piero Cazago, left us, a legacy of 400 lire planete to each of us, to be paid out at the time of our marrying or entering religion; but as this was not likely to be the case, we do not know how to obtain it.... We are at present living in the house of our said sister Giulia, wife of the late Jacomo Antonio di Villi, without paying any rent, but we are living separately from her. If we had to leave here, and this could happen any day, we would have to pay out rent for a house and spend a lot of money on furnishing it, because we have virtually no furniture of our own".6b

This situation of the Peschera sisters, probably typical of many others, may have made the mother general of the Company want to make

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> SLG, f.100r.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> PE, n.103.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6b</sup> "Pretendemo raggione di conseguire da gli heredi del quondam domino Girolamo Peschera, nostri nepoti, li nostri dotti, alla summa della dote datta per quondam nostri fratelli et nostra madre a madonna Giulia nostra sorella, quala è di L. 3000, oltra la portione della dote materna a noi spettante. Ma però poco ne speramo, per non esser noi atte a litigare, et la lite pende sopra ciò a Venetia. Manifestamo anchora esserne stato fatto uno legato alias per il quondam domino Gio. Piero Cazago, olim nostro barba, di L. 400 planete per ciascuna, da esserne pagato al tempo che se maritassimo, overo intrassimo religione; ma per non essere venuto tal caso, non sapiamo di conseguirlo... Stemo al presente in casa di madonna Giulia soprascritta, nostra sorella, moglie del quondam domino Jacomo Antonio di Villi, senza pagar fitto alcuno, facendo però familia separatamente da lei. Ma, bisognando partir di li, il che potrà occorrere alla giornata, saressimo necessitate pagar fitto di casa, et spendere assai in mobiliarsi, che pochi mobeli et quasi niuno habbiamo".

the legal value of the Bull more widely known in order to give backing to any action that she might take with regard to the civil authorities, and to enable her in some way to get the virgins reinstated in this legal right which the Holy See had granted them.

And later on, Giulia Peschera, widow Villi, reacted in a positive way, as can be seen from her will<sup>7</sup>, published on 27 April 1596, which we discovered. After having made provision for her nephews Camillo and Ascanio, sons of her brother Girolamo, Giulia appointed their sister Susanna, member of the Company, universal heiress.

The notarial act drawn up by Piazza records: "But because the aforesaid Testatrix feels obliged by conscience to bequeath her house out of love of God, or for the carrying out of good works and for divine worship, if not immediately after her death, at least after the death of the aforesaid dame Susanna, who, being a member of the Company of the Virgins of St Ursula, is consecrated to the service of the Lord in that profession, she wishes her to live there during her lifetime, together with any others she would like to keep her company, provided that they are of the same profession or at least are approved by the government of the said Company of St Ursula. On one condition though: no man of any kind may live there, even though he may be closely related to the said dame Susanna. She lays down, however, that this house, as well as the small house next to it, after the death of the said Susanna, be handed over and devoted to some good work, which will be selected and named by the said Susanna, or that it be used for the worship and the service of God according to what the said Susanna thinks fit, disposes and orders, to whom permission is given to do as she deems best in the eyes of God. And if it happened that the said dame Susanna should die intestate or without having made any arrangements about the said house, in such a case she wishes the house to be handed over and used by the aforesaid Company of the Virgins of St Ursula of Brescia...".7b

<sup>7</sup> ASB, Fondo Notarile, notaio Antonio Piazza, file 2600.

The "Ma perché essa suddetta Testatrice ha obligo di conscientia di lasciar la casa dove habita per amor di Dio, o dedicarla in opera di servitio et colto divino, se non subito doppo la morte sua, almeno doppo la morte della soprascritta madonna Susanna, la qual essendo della Compagnia delle Vergini di Santa Orsola et dedicata al servitio del Signore in quella professione, vuole che essa, mentre viverà, possa habitar in quella, et insieme con lei altre ancora che a lei paresse di tener per sua compagnia, che siino o della istessa sua professione, o almeno approvate dal governo della ditta Compagnia di Santa Orsola. Con questo, però, che non vi possino habitar huomini di sorti alcuna, etiam che fossero parenti stretti di detta madonna Susanna. Però lascia che detta casa, insieme con la casa piccola a quella contigua, doppo la morte della detta madonna Susanna pervenga et sia devoluta qualche opera buona, qual sarà stata eletta et nominata per detta madonna Susanna, over impiegata in colto et servitio di Dio secondo che alla detta madonna Susanna parerà, et sarà stato per lei disposto et ordinato, dandogli impositione et facultà in ciò di fare secondo si sentirà da Dio inspirata.

In addition Giulia would bequeath to the Company of Brescia 60 lire planete, to be received over a period of four years, "to be distributed among the sick of the said Company who are poor".

### c) The Ritual

Put to the test of time, the Company's structures had proved sound and efficient. But with the increase of membership, the need to make adjustments to meet new demands, and the necessity of entering into the spirit of the Catholic Reformation by putting into practice the decrees of the Council of Trent, some changes in actual practice had been introduced.

And so it is that the *Regola* published by Damiano Turlino, in the chapter on the admission of young women, lays down three stages of the journey leading towards the final commitment: "she must be at least twelve years old when she presents herself, at least fifteen years when she is accepted in chapter, and between eighteen and twenty when she is inscribed in the authentic book".8

We know, though, that the most ancient text of the Regola, as is found in the Trivulzian manuscript, simply said: "she must be at least twelve years old".9

Twelve years was at that time the valid age for a woman to marry. In the family statements in the "polizze d'estimo", one frequently meets the phrase: "mia fiola ... de anni 12 da maridar", and we often found there young wives who had only just exceeded that age. This justifies the minimum age-limit fixed by Angela for entrance into the Company.

The three steps indicated in the printed Rule and the corresponding ceremonial were codified in the printed work Ordine et Ceremonie che si fanno con le Vergini che vogliono entrar nella Compagnia di S. Orsola di Brescia. <sup>10</sup> This Ritual was published with the same type as the Regola, by the same publisher, but not at the same time, since they appear as two distinct works.

It is relatively easy to establish the "terminus ad quem" of the Ritual because it was printed by Damiano Turlino, and we know that in

Et occorrendo che detta madonna Susanna moresse senza testamento, o senza haver fatto altra dispositione intorno alla detta casa, in tal caso vuole che pervenga et sia devoluta nella Compagnia predetta delle Vergini di Santa Orsola di Brescia...".

8 Regola, Ch.II; D2.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> D1, Ch.I.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Ordine et Ceremonie che si fanno con le Vergini che vogliono entrar nella Compagnia di S. Orsola di Brescia, in Brescia, per Damiano Turlino, s.a. (BQ, Cinquecentine, E.E.I.m.2; B.Vat, Propaganda III, 262, int.3; British Museum, 4061.e.29/2).

1572 he had already been replaced by the "Heredes Damiani Turlini". 11 It is not as simple, though, to date its contents and the structures referred to in it.

The first clue is provided by the presence in the text of three categories of persons charged with examining the request of the aspirants at the various stages: matrons, mistresses, colonelle. As we shall see, this division would probably only be recognised "de iure" on 28 October 1572; here it appears simply as existing "de facto".

Nor are we able to fix the date when the three stages of the formation and membership process were introduced, each one clearly marked with its own distinctive ceremonial. They may have been suggested by

the reformist spirit of the Council of Trent.

We do not intend to give a detailed structural analysis of the Ritual or to study it by comparing it with its possible sources, especially with the Romano-Germanic Pontifical (of the 10th century), the Pontifical of Durand, bishop of Mende (1292-95), a work which one day would become the official book of the Roman Church, and the Pontificals of Piccolomini and Burchard (Rome, 1485), of Luzzi and Burchard (Rome, 1497), and that of Castellani (Venice, 1520). We will confine ourselves to presenting the formal element of the three stages and the more typically Merician lines of force which have come to light in this jewel of 16th century Ursuline literature.

It would be desirable to make a further study later on the successive publications of this Ritual, printed in the appendix of various editions of the Regola of the Company of St Ursula, and in use up to this 20th century.

But that is outside our scope.

# The three steps

The three steps for aggregating someone to the Company were as follows: the *presentation* of the young girl to the Company, her *acceptance* in the Chapter, her *reception* (or final admission) into the Company.

In the *first step*, the passage regarding the *presentation* is a synthesis of the spirituality proposed to the maiden, and which the maiden had to make her own through the daily practice of ascesis and contemplation: "All those virgins who, led by both their own spirit and by the divine

11 Cf. Evandrophilactus cit.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> We refer to RENÉ METZ, La Consécration des Vierges dans l'Église Romaine, Étude d'Histoire de la Liturgie, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1954.

spirit, abandoning on one hand the vanities of the world and the sensualities of the flesh, and on the other clothing themselves in patience, obedience and humility, and placing all their ardent love solely in Jesus, Saviour of the world, whom they accept as their most loving Spouse, wish to enter the present Company of the spouses of Jesus, which in this magnificent city is governed under the name of the Rule of the triumphant martyr and queen St Ursula, must first of all receive the first order which is called presentation in this Company, which is carried out in the following way for those who are at least twelve years old and not less than twelve".<sup>13</sup>

Mention is made of the maiden's free choice and of her compliance with the action of the Holy Spirit ("she must enter joyfully and of her own free will", 14 and obey "the counsels and inspirations which the Holy Spirit unceasingly sends into our hearts" 15). The reference to exterior dispossession is clear, but equally clear is the call to the necessary building up of the "new man", clothed in that Merician "piacevolezza" which is the fruit of one's self-offering, of obedience and, above all, of interior self-emptying.

Especially clear is the reference to the most recurring theme in the writings of Angela, namely that love which alone can give sense and value of nuptial rite to the offering of oneself; a bridal love which invites the maiden to participate in the redemptive work of Christ and prepares

her to share in the lot of the Bridegroom.

This first step was carried out in the presence of the spiritual father of the Company, the virgins and the matrons of the government. Each candidate expressed her desire to be admitted in front of her father or her mother, or even a brother. The institutional hierarchy and the familial authority thus found themselves face to face, both of them a witness to the freedom of choice and together a safeguard of the moral and spiritual commitment undertaken. And this dialogue between the family and the institution had also been a desire of Angela. 16

Having put aside the vanities of this world in her way of dressing,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Ordine, op. cit., f.[2r]. "Tutte quelle vergini che, mosse per proprio et celeste spirito, lassiando da una parte le vanità del mondo et sensualità carnali, et de laltra parte vestendosi di pacientia, obedientia et humiltà, et solamente inamorandosi ardentemente di Giesù Salvatore del universo, et quello accettando per suo charissimo sposo, desiderarano entrare nella presente Compagnia delle spose di Giesù, la quale in questa magnifica città si rege sotto il nome della Regola della triunfante martire et regina santa Orsola, prima li convenerà haver il primo ordine, che da detta Compagnia si dice presentatione, la quale si fa così con quelle hanno almeno anni dodeci et non di minor età".

Regola, D1, Ch.I.
 Ibid. Ch.VIII.

<sup>16</sup> D1, Ch.I.

the maiden started on her journey of formation in the Company of St Ursula, a journey which would take some years.

The second step, that of being accepted in Chapter, was carried through in two distinct stages. The maiden had to submit first to the judgment of the virgins and the matrons of the government, who had to examine her behaviour in her presence. It was a test of courageous loyalty, undertaken in that Merician spirit of honesty and uprightness recommended in the chapter on virginity: yes, yes; no, no. Under examination were the young girl's fidelity to the devotional and community practices in use in the Company, the practice of virtues and that duty of good example which was the subject of a clear command by Angela: "But may all our words, actions and initiatives be a lesson and good example for those who have dealings with us".<sup>17</sup>

"But if one of those who wish to be accepted is found unworthy of the chapter on account of being either negligent at prayer, or not very serious over fasting, or proud in worldly matters, or far from obedience, or disrespectful of what is laid down by the Rule, the reverend Father should encourage her to desire to become like each of those who are accepted, and then she will be received with kindness". 18

And then, on the following 25 November, those "accepted" participated in the celebration of a community Mass; they listened to the spiritual father's exhortation "intorno alla verginità". The homily did not dwell on the various virtues to be practised, but on the virginity which characterised their state of life. The minimum age required for this step was fifteen: the candidates were now women; it was now possible to speak to them about renouncing the love of a man in order to embrace the love of God.

The celebration of the second stage concluded with a devotional act, quite popular among the people at that time: kissing one of the crosses on the stole of the celebrant.

For the third stage or reception, the young girl had to be 18 to 20 years old, "and more or less according to her spirit". But in order to be-

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., Ch.IX.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Ordine, op. cit., ff.[2v-3r]. "Ma se alcuna di esse, che vol essere così accettata, non vien essere conosciuta degna del capitolo, per essere stata o negligente alle orationi, o poco sobria nelli degiuni, o superba delle cose mondane, o lontana della obidientia, o non osservatrice di quanto comanda la regola, la vien essortata dal reverendo Padre che voglia essere tale, quale è ciascuna altra delle accettate, che benignamente sarà receputa".

long fully and definitively to the Company, the candidates must give proof "that they are totally established in a very ardent love of the Lord, and that during their time of the chapter, they have been always vigilant in prayer, strict in fasting, humble in obedience, patient in adversities and fervent in the path of the Lord Jesus".<sup>19</sup>

The celebration of this rite, very rich in gestures, prayers and symbolism, took place in the presence of the entire Company assembled together in the church appointed for this. It included some of the ceremonies from the Roman Pontifical. The singing of the *Veni Creator*, optional in the 1497 Pontifical, <sup>20</sup> was made obligatory here, in homage perhaps to that devotion to the Holy Spirit which Angela frequently reveals in her writings.

The hymn "Jesu corona virginum" and the antiphons "Veni sponsa Christi" before the crowning ceremony and "Vade sponsa Christi" at the end of the ceremony<sup>21</sup>, apart from their traditional significance, had here a didactic purpose of laying stress on the link between the concept of espousal and that of consecrated virginity.

As the maiden presented herself at the altar, she received a lighted candle and heard the words exhorting her to preserve her purity as the wise virgins had kept alight their lamp on the eve of the wedding-feast.

She then received the cincture, which had now become the distinc-

tive sign of the Company of St Ursula.

The handing over of the crucifix and the blessing which preceded it did not exist in the Roman Ritual. This is not surprising as the crucifix had only recently become an object of personal devotion among Christians. The prayer which accompanied this action could well serve as a reminder of the radicalism of the interior dispossession proposed by Angela: "They should have Jesus Christ for their only treasure", 22 and again: "[the man poor in spirit] puts all his wealth in God; apart from God he sees himself as completely poor, as absolutely nothing, but he knows that with God he possesses everything". The Ritual in fact gives the formula: "Take this image of Jesus Christ crucified, your creator and saviour. He alone is all you need: you have chosen the better part, which

<sup>20</sup> METZ, La Consécration, op. cit., p.331.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Ibid. "essere totalmente stabelite nel ardentissimo amore del Signore, e che nel suo tempo del Capitolo sempre sono state vigilanti nelle orationi, solecite nelli digiuni, humili nella obedientia, patienti nelle adversità et ferventi nella via del Signore Giesù".

<sup>21</sup> Ordine, op. cit., in Gregorian chant on ff.[7v-8r].

<sup>22</sup> Ricordi, 5th Counsel; D4.

<sup>23</sup> Regola, Chapter on Poverty.

will never be taken away from you".24

The blessing and the imposition of the crown existed already in Durand's Pontifical (13th century) and would later be included in the Ritual for the consecration of religious. To the ears of the virgins of the Company they must have sounded like an echo of their Mother's teaching: "How much they should exult and rejoice, for a new crown of glory and joy is prepared in heaven for each and every one of them, provided that they remain unshaken and firm in their resolve".<sup>25</sup>

The blessing and formula said: "Benedic, Domine, coronas istas, ut sint remedium salutare generi humano, et praesta, per invocationem tui nominis, ut quaecunque illis coronarentur, corporis sanitatem et animae tutelam percipiant; et si tibi fideliter servierint, coronam – quam istae coronae designant – in caelo percipere mereantur: per Te, Salvator mundi, qui in Trinitate perfecta vivis et regnas, Deus, per omnia saecula saeculorum. Amen". 26 "Take the sign of Christ upon your head so that you may become his Bride. And if you live in him, you will be crowned with the crown of immortality". 27

At the eucharistic celebration there then followed the "Benedictio Matthaei Apostoli": "Deus plasmator corporum...", <sup>28</sup> one of the two traditional blessings of virgins at that time.

The ceremony concluded with the singing of an antiphon which was also a reminder: "Vade, sponsa Christi. Et sis humilis et obediens usque ad mortem, ut Christo complaceas in aeternum. Ut cum sanctis virginibus, sponsis Christi, ascendas ad caelestem gloriam, ubi permansura es in aeternum".<sup>29</sup>

### The vow of the virgins

In the Ritual there is no reference to the public vow of chastity. This may be explained by the fact that the vow was not prescribed by the institution nor was it a factor of discrimination within the Company, but

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Ordine, op. cit., f.[5v]: "Piglia questa imagine di Giesù Christo crucifisso, creatore et salvatore tuo. Solo questo è a te necessario: ottima cosa hai elletta, la quale da te non sarà levata in eterno".

<sup>25</sup> Ricordi, 5th Counsel; D4.

Ordine, op. cit., f.[4v].
 Ibid., f.[5v]: "Piglia il segno di Christo sopra il tuo capo, accioché tu sia sua sposa. Et se permanerai in lui, sarai coronata della corona della immortalità".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> It is taken from the "Passio Mathaei", dating back to the middle of the 6th century. Cf. R.A. Lipsius, *Die Apokryphen Apostelgeschichten und Apostellegenden, ein Beitrag zur altchristlichen Literaturgeschichte*, t.I, Braunschweig, 1883, pp.117-118; t.II, 1884, pp.137-141, in METZ, *La Consécration, op. cit.*, pp.206-207. It was taken over by the "Romano-Germanic Pontifical" or "of Mainz", which owed its success throughout Western Christendom to its comprehensiveness. *Ordine, op. cit.*, f.[6r-v]. <sup>29</sup> *Ordine, op. cit.*, ff.[6v-7r] and f.[8r].

was left to the free choice of the individual. With regard to the Merician Rule, it was introduced later.

As for the the private vow, likewise optional for the maidens of the

Company, it seems to go back to Angela's day.

Evidence of the vow of chastity from both these aspects is to be found in a page which Faino copied from the *Libro rosso*<sup>30</sup> and which we are giving in full:

"Vow of the Virgins.

"The vow in use at present and which is pronounced by the virgins of the Rule of St Ursula, was introduced by the reverend Madre Suor Angela and by the reverend father Don Serafino of Bologna, canon regular, her confessor.<sup>31</sup>

"The said reverend Madre Sur Angela having died (in 1540), the noble lady countess Lucretia Lodrona became Mother of the said Company, under whom the vow continued in the same way. At that time, the confessor of the said Rule was the reverend father Don Pavolo of Cremona, canon regular, with whose permission the reverend father Don Grisante, canon of S. Pietro Oliveto<sup>32</sup> also heard confessions. Under the direction of these two confessors, about 90 virgins of the said Rule pronounced this yow.

"After the death of the aforesaid lady countess Lucretia Lodrona, lady Bianca Porcelaga<sup>33</sup> was elected Mother of the Company and con-

firmed by our very reverend bishop, Mgr Domenico Bolani.34

"Then in 1560 the reverend father Don Francesco Cabrino d'Alfianello was elected Father of the Company. This man, who led a saintly life at S. Maria di Pace <today S. Gaetano > received about one hundred virgins. Several months later, many of the virgins wanted to change their interior vow and give the tree and the fruit of their soul and body to God,35 so that neither the enemy nor the world could cause them trouble.

"The said reverend Father, seeing how well disposed was the spirit

32 We did not carry out any special research about these two confessors.

FAINO, Miscellanea, op. cit., f.[16].
 Cf. supra, Pt.II. Ch.VI, 3.a, note 27.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> There is a mistake in this account of the succession. Lucrezia Lodrone was succeeded directly by Ginevra Luzzago and collaterally by Veronica Buzzi. Bianca Porcellaga became superior of the Company at the time of its reunification but she might have been the direct successor of Ginevra Luzzago. On the death of Bianca Porcellaga, it was Veronica Buzzi who succeeded her, put in charge once again after a period of interruption. Cf. supra, Pt.III, Ch.II.

<sup>34</sup> We did not find any document confirming this.
35 Cf. LUZZARI. Vite on cit. pp. 73-75, where the passage al-

<sup>35</sup> Cf. LUZZARI, Vite, op. cit., pp.73-75, where the passage about Cabrino is given almost word for word.

of these said virgins, went to see the very reverend Bishop, informing him of their good desire to reform their vow. The said reverend Bishop, aware that the very reverend Cardinal Borromeo had allowed the virgins at Milan to make a similar vow,<sup>36</sup> and having taken advice on the matter from the Father provincial of the Jesuits and from the reverend canons Don Agostino Gentile and Don Paolo Corte, ordered the said virgins to reform their vow, on one condition though: they had to be more than 20 years old. And the vow was pronounced in the following way:

#### "Formula of the vow

"In the name of the Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In praise of the glorious humanity of Our Lord Jesus Christ and of his immaculate mother the Virgin Mary, and of all the Saints in Paradise, I, (N...), hereby make a vow and promise to almighty God, to the glorious virgin and mother Mary and to all the blessed souls of Paradise, especially to St Ursula with all her Company, and in your presence, venerable Father general and venerable Mother of our Company and before all the persons present, to observe perpetual chastity all the length of my life. And so I beg his divine Majesty to deign to accept this vow which I make with all my fervour and to give me the grace to carry it out perfectly. Amen".37

The Rule said clearly: "Let them understand though that this proposal of virginity must not be understood as a vow, that it does not have the force of a vow, either private or solemn, unless they pronounce it expressly, or have already done so. And in the case when one or other desires to make the vow of virginity, let her not be in any hurry to do it, knowing that it is better not to make a vow than, having made it, not keep it". "Sappiano però che tal proposito di verginità non s'intende esser voto, né haver virtù di voto, né privato né solenne, salvo se elle espressamente non lo facessero, o non l'havessero già fatto. Et in caso che alcuna desiderasse di far voto di verginità, non sia precipitosa a farlo, sapendo esser meglio non far il voto che, fatto, non servarlo". (Regola della Compagnia di Santa Orsola fatta per quelle giovani, le quali desiderano servir a Dio nel stato verginale stando nel secolo... Milano, appresso di Giovan Battista et fratelli da Ponte alla Dovana, 1567; ASDM, sez.XII, m.145, p.[6v]).

"Voto delle Vergini."

"Il voto che hora si usa, et che fanno le vergini della Regola di S. Orsola, fu comminciato per la reverenda Madre Sor Angela et per il reverendo padre don Serafino da Bologna, canonico regolare, suo confessore.

"Morta poi la detta reverenda Madre Sor Angela (nel 1540), fu fatta Madre della detta Compagnia la magnifica signora contessa Lucretia Lodrona, sotto della quale similmente perseverò detto voto. Nel qual tempo si trovava confessore di detta Regola il reverendo padre don Pavolo da Cremona, canonico regolare, con licentia del quale era anche confessore il reverendo padre don Grisante, canonico in S. Pietro Oliveto. Sotto il reggimento delli quali confessori, da circa 90 vergini di detta Regola giurorno il detto voto.

"Dopo la morte della sodetta signora contessa Lucretia Lodrona, fu eletta per Madre della Compagnia la signora Bianca Porcelaga e dal reverendissimo episcopo nostro confirmata; mons. Domenico Bolani.

"Poi, del 1560 fu eletto Padre della Compagnia il reverendo don padre Francesco Cabrino d'Al-

#### 2. THE INSTITUTIONAL CHANGES

A comparison between the Regola published by Turlino and the Trivulzian manuscript reveals the close correlation between the two texts. This would suggest that between 1535 and 1569 no changes were made, apart from those which we have already mentioned concerning the habit and the stages of formation.

But even if the text of the Rule proves an indisputable continuity, in actual practice there were already signs of new patterns of behaviour on the way to becoming the accepted norm. When Isabetta Prato took over the reins of government, the innovatory tendencies – not always clearly justifiable – would gather momentum. Almost imperceptibly, the structures would undergo a gradual modification

### a) The new structures

The first symptom of change appeared in the "Ritual": the committee of members qualified to accept the aspirants at the three distinct stages or "orders" consists of the Mother of the Company , and then the "lady-governors", the "mistresses" and the "colonelle".<sup>38</sup>

fianello, huomo di santa vita in S. Maria di Pace < oggi S. Gaetano > il quale accettò da circa cento vergini. Dopo molti mesi fu instato da molte vergini di voler reformare il suo intrinsico voto et donar a Dio l'arbore et il frutto dell'anima e corpo suo, accioché il nemico et il mondo non gli dasse molestia.

"Vedendo il detto reverendo Padre l'animo delle dette vergini così ben disposto, andò dal detto reverendissimo Episcopo, notificandogli il buon animo di esse di reformare il loro voto. Et sapendo il detto reverendo Episcopo che anche in Milano il reverendissimo cardinale Boromeo faceva fare simil voto a quelle vergini di Milano, et anche così consigliato dal Padre provinciale de Giesuiti e dalli reverendi canonici don Agostino Gentile e don Paolo Corte, ordinò che le dette vergini reformassero il loro voto, con questo, però: che passassero l'età di 20 anni. Et il voto già detto è stato con tal modo fatto dalle vergini:

#### "Forma del voto

"Al nome della Santissima Trinità, Padre, Figliuolo et Spirito Santo. A laude della gloriosa humanità del nostro signor Giesù Christo e della sua immacolata madre vergine Maria, et di tutti li Santi del Paradiso, io, N... di N..., faccio voto et prometto all'Onnipotente Dio, alla gloriosa vergine e madre Maria, et a tutti li spiriti beati del Paradiso, in particolare a sant'Orsola con tutta la sua Compagnia, qui in presentia di voi, venerando Padre generale et veneranda Madre della nostra Compagnia, et delle persone assistenti, di osservare tutto il tempo della vita mia perpetua castità. Et così prego sua divina Maestà che voglia accettare questo mio fervente voto e darmi gratia di perfettamente adempirlo. Amen".

We have reported in full this text which Faino entitled: "Copiate le seguenti Memorie dal Registro Rosso della Compagnia di S. Orsola", FAINO, Miscellanea, op. cit., f.166r-v. GONDI also speaks about the vow of the virgins of Brescia, Vita, op. cit., pp.54-55; as well as DONEDA, Vita, op. cit, pp.96-97 and 167. The latter gives the detail that the public vow of chastity was pronounced for the first time on 21 January 1568, and that the names of those who made it were inscribed in the Libro rosso, beginning from folio 21. Cf. supra, Pt.III, Ch.I, Appendix Note.

38 Ordine, op. cit., ff.[2r-3v].

These three names ("governatrici", "maestre" and "colonelle") may seem at first sight to be a simple variation of vocabulary, involving just another distinction of offices. But the term "governatrici" applied in this case – and by those responsible for the Ritual – to the "matrons", is already an indication of a new mentality which was gaining ground and which was directed towards increasing the authority of the matrons. The terms "maestre" and "colonelle" used here indicate that the function which had initially been the prerogative of the virgin-colonnelle was now divided into two.

In this institutional development, a decision taken in 1572 was of primary importance. The background to it is not otherwise documented, but it is to be found in the *Secondo Libro Generale* under the following title:

### "Institution of the seven districts of the Company"

"The blessed Angela having arranged that, in addition to the father general and mother general, four of the most able virgins of the Company and four prudent and modest matron-widows should be elected. the latter being responsible for governing all the virgins together with the colonelle, and having on the other hand written in her testament that, when it was judged expedient and necessary, the rules could be changed from time to time, the government, seeing the great increase in the number of the aforementioned maidens, arranged in the year 1572 for the entire Company to be divided into seven districts and for three women to be assigned to the government of each of these districts. The first, who would be one of the matrons elected to the government, would be called the Lady ("Madonna") of this district. The second would be one of the most capable virgins of the said district and would be called Mistress ("Maestra"), as she would be responsible for guiding the said maidens along the path of the spiritual life. The third would be one of the most experienced virgins or even a good widow, who would be called "Collonella". Their particular charge will be noted down in this book. On account of all this, it was necessary to increase the number of ladies, mistresses and colonelle. And because the said blessed Angela realised that it can often happen that the virgins are faced by the kind of needs which women do not know how to meet, it was her desire that four mature and upright men should be elected, who would be called agents.

"In addition to this arrangement given in the Rule, the government of this Company after the death of the blessed Angela added to it four men-governors from among the leading and distinguished persons of the city, to whom recourse could be had when there were serious matters concerning the Company. These also will all be gradually noted down in this book, at the proper place".<sup>39</sup>

This document calls to mind the original government structure as laid down by Angela, 40 with the four virgin-colonelle and the four widow-matrons, who together had to govern the entire Company. But now the assignment of a group of three to each district (seven districts, given the increase in membership) broke up the initial collegial team of matrons which had been set up for the service and safeguard of the entire Company. Each matron was now placed in a leading position in the district. The matrons' power had originally been exercised in a collegial fashion, but with this division of power, inevitably it became individual. And each matron, by virtue of her personal prestige and on the strength of the decision which had just been taken, now found herself invested with the maximum authority within the district. The authority of the colonella, who had always exercised the role of local superior, was now curtailed.

As for the mother general, she eventually found herself at the top of the institutional hierarchy, in a position of autonomy, perhaps of absolutism. Such a conception had very little of the Merician dimension in it.

No month is indicated in the 1572 document which we have reported above. We cannot, therefore, ascribe the responsibility for the changes to either Veronica Buzzi or to Isabetta Prato, although there is no dearth of evidence pointing to Isabetta's administrative skills and

39 SLG, f.45r. "Istitutione delli sette collonelli della Compagnia"

"Havendo la beata Angela disposto che, oltra il padre et madre generali, si dovesse eleggere quatro virgini delle più sufficienti della Compagnia, quatro matrone vedove prudenti et modeste, le quali havessero da governar tutte le vergini insieme con le collonelle, et dall'altra parte havendo posto nel suo testamento che, quando si vedesse espediente et necessario, si puotesse mutar li ordini di tempo in tempo, vedendosi accrescer molto il numero delle sudette virgini, tutto il governo insieme congregato ordinò dell'anno 1572 che si dividesse tutta la Compagnia in sette collonelli, et ad ogni collonello gli fussero poste trei donne al suo particolar governo. Et la prima fusse una di quelle matrone elette al governo la qual se dimandasse Madonna di esso collonello. La seconda fusse una delle più sufficienti virgini dil detto collonello, et si chiamasse Maestra, per haver da guidar dette virgini nella via et vita spirituale. La terza fusse una vergine delle più mature, overo una vedova da bene, la quale se dimandasse Collonella. L'officio particolar delle quali sarà notato in questo libro; per questo fu necessario ad accrescere il numero delle madonne, delle maestre, et delle collonelle. Et perché la detta beata Angela conosceva che molte volte occorre necessità tali alle vergini, che le donne non sono sufficienti a provedergli, volse che si eleggesse quatro huomini maturi et di approbata vita, quali se dimandassero agenti.

"Et oltra questo ordine datto nella Regola, il governo di detta Compagnia doppo la morte della beata Angela gli aggionse quatro governatori di primi et principali della città, alli quali nelle cose gravi della Compagnia s'havesse a ricorrere, li quali tutti gradatamente saranno notati al suo luogo,

nel presente libro".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>40</sup> For the composition of the government, cf. supra, Pt.II, Ch.VIII, 3.

sense of power. The new structures and their implementation certainly presuppose a certain period of maturation which must have involved the members of the government, or at least have found them consenting to them.

Isabetta Prato, elected on 21 October 1572, found herself at the head of a Company now well established. She was then 70 years old (in the 1568 "polizza d'estimo" she had stated that she was 66), and had already been short-listed with Veronica Buzzi in the voting of 1555. From the time when the "libro bollato" had been introduced she had shown herself to be open to changes and had taken sides with Lucrezia Lodrone. When at last she was elected mother general, she revealed a certain over-hastiness of intervention and action which denoted a decisive and forceful personality.

Angela had employed democratic methods to establish the norms of life. Cozzano is a witness to this: the Mother did not have things done, but always asked for them to be done; she welcomed suggestions, she used to discuss them with her daughters; she encouraged experimentation; she appreciated their contribution, following the example of God because "what he does in man with the consent of man, he rewards him

as if man had done it all by himself".42

Present at Isabetta Prato's election<sup>43</sup> – and this is something to note – were the archpriest of the cathedral, Mgr Agostino Gentile, who also represented the archdeacon, Mgr Alessandro Durante, both of them "protectors and apostolic conservators of the congregation or company", also the confessor general, Don Giovan Paolo Iseppino (more generally known as Usupino), his coadjutor Don Stefano Giroldi, and finally Master Ziliano Lombardi and the notary Antonio Piazza, these last two in their role as agents of the Company.

Out of all the matrons mentioned in Angela's *Testamento*, Isabetta Prato and Leonella Pedezocca were the only two left. The names of the other six matrons present then appear for the first time in the acts of the Company which we possess. The colonelle summoned already numbered

seven.

Only eight days after her election, on 28 October 1572, Isabetta Prato summoned together in her house (perhaps in the famous "oratory") "the undersigned lady-governors, matrons, mistresses and colonelle [the minutes give the list of names here], elected to the general gov-

41 Cf. supra, Pt.III, Ch.I, 1.c.

43 SLG, ff.55v-56r.

<sup>42</sup> COZZANO, Dichiarazione, op. cit., D24, [f.974r-v].

ernment of this Company".<sup>44</sup> This trilogy of titles thus endorsed the distinction already made in the Ritual, even if the terminology is not exactly the same (in the Ritual, in fact, the term "governatrici" is reserved for the matrons).

This is the first time that the Secondo Libro Generale mentions in a set of minutes the virgins with the role of "maestre". The minutes of Isabetta Prato's election listed their names with all the others, without any distinction. It may be that previously they exercised their charge only "de facto".

And, moreover, Cozzano had already foreseen their creation: "mistresses for the little novices can be made";<sup>45</sup> but it is not known whether he thought this charge was desirable or only something likely to happen.

The minutes of the council-meeting of 9 November 1572, held to approve the acceptance of the aspirants in Chapter, would list the names of the seven mistresses and the seven colonelle.<sup>46</sup>

# b) The "directory of offices"

We have said that Isabetta Prato stands out as an innovative personality. At the council-meeting of 28 October - a week after her election - she proposed some "ordinances" which, put to the vote, were approved unanimously. The fifth and the sixth were worded as follows: "5th. That the directory of offices distributed to the matrons for the government and which contains all that the maidens of their district must observe, be kept and carried out in full. These offices have been carefully considered, discussed, and finally approved by the very reverend Mgr Agostino Gentile, archpriest of the cathedral and apostolic conservator of this Company; they will be written down in the register as below. 6th. That the directory likewise given to the mistresses for the government, containing the warnings and the instructions which they must give the maidens who are already members or who hope to enter the congregation, that is in chapter, and to be accepted as above, be carried out, because they have been similarly approved as the ones above and will be entered in the register".47

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., f.150r.

<sup>45</sup> COZZANO, Dichiarazione, op. cit., D24, [f.979v].

<sup>46</sup> SLG, f.151v.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup> Ibid., f.150v. "5°. Che le polize delli ufficii, distribuite per il governo alle madonne, nei quali si contengono quanto hanno da servar con le virgini del suo collonello [meglio "colonellato": giurisdizione di un colonello] siano al tutto servate et essequite. Li quali uffici sono stati maturamente considerati, et discorsi, et finalmente approbati dal molto reverendo mons. Agostino Gentile, arciprete

The "polize delli ufficii", leaflets containing the prescribed rules to help the matrons and the mistresses carry out their office, had therefore already been distributed to the lady-governors and to the mistresses after having been "carefully considered, discussed and finally approved ...". And all this within the space of a week? Or had the matter been raised earlier? But by whom? When? How? We do not know. The speed of Isabetta's action – if the rules are hers – stands out in sharp contrast to the democratic method used by Angela in her legislation and recorded by Cozzano.

These "polize delli ufficii" were never completed; certain pages, left blank, bear the following titles: "Qual sia l'officio del Rev.do Padre generale della Compagnia", "Qual sia l'officio della Madre generale della Compagnia", "L'ufficio delle collonelle". 48

But the two leaflets which had just been distributed were copied out, entitled: "L'ufficio delle Madonne deputate sopra ciascun collonello" and "L'ufficio delle Maestre deputate sopra ciascun collonello et quello che devon aricordar et insegnar alle virgini". 49

Teresa Ledóchowska was the first to publish these two texts.<sup>50</sup> We also reproduce them in order to give a fuller picture of the rules as a whole, such as they were enforced at the time of the government of Isabetta Prato. It must be remembered, though, that it is not known who was really responsible for them, or what part was played in their elaboration by Mgr Agostino Gentile who gave his approval to them.

# "The office of the Matrons assigned to each district.

1. To know all the maidens in her district, each one by name, state and condition, loving them as her daughters in Christ.

2. To take great care to see that they observe the things taken from the Rule which the mistresses have taught them, and to those who are disobedient, they will allocate some appropriate penance as suggested by the Lord.

3. So that everything goes on in the most orderly way possible, it will be very useful for the matron to go and visit in person the confes-

del Domo et conservator apostolico di detta Compagnia; li quali sarano ut infra registrati. 6º. Che le polize parimente consignate per il governo alle maestre, circa li avertimenti et amaestramenti che devono dar alle virgini che sono al presente, overo che voranno entrar nella congregatione over capitulo, et esser accettate ut supra, siano essequite; le quali parimente sono state approbate ut supra et saranno registrati".

<sup>48</sup> SLG, respectively on ff.250r, 252r, 258r; cf. supra, Pt.I, Ch.I, 3.c.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., ff.254r and 256r-v.

<sup>50</sup> LEDÓCHOWSKA, Angela, op. cit., II, pp.374-376.

sor of each of the daughters in her district, according as the need arises, to inform him about the qualities of the said maiden for her spiritual well-being.

The matron will take care to see that provision is made, in all charity, for the spiritual and corporal needs of the infirm. Similarly, when there is some poor member of the Company reduced to hardship, she will come to her aid with alms in any way that she can.

5. That at the moment of death, at least two sisters, chosen by her,

should be present.

That after the death, suitable funeral arrangements should be made, and that the father and the mother of the Company should be informed about it as soon as possible.

7. That she, together with the mistress and the colonella, should take great care of the novices; that she should know their habits well so that she can, with a clear conscience, give evidence about them when they want to enter the chapter or the Company.

That she should meet the mistress and the colonella at least once a

fortnight for the needs of her district.

That she should call together a meeting of all her district in the week appointed by the mother of the Company, according to the order of the seven districts, and that she keep a list of all the needs which she herself, together with the mistress and the colonella, was unable to meet, and that she then take it to the general assembly of all the government which will take place after the separate meetings".51

51 SLG, f.254r. "L'ufficio delle Madonne deputate sopra ciascun collonello.

1. Di conoscere distinctamente, quanto al nome, stato et conditione, tutte le virgini del suo collo-

nello, amandole come figliuole nel Signore.

2. Di veder con ogni diligentia che osservino le cose quali gl'insegnano le maestre, cavate dalla Regola, et a quelle che saranno disubedienti, gli daranno quella discreta punitione, che il Signore gli suggerirà.

3. Acciò che le cose caminino più regulatamente che sia possibile, sarà cosa molto giovevole che la madonna vada in persona dal confessore di ciascuna figliuola di detto suo collonello, secondo vederà

il bisogno, per informarlo delle qualità di detta figliuola per utile dell'anima sua.

4. Avertirà detta madonna che alle infirme gli sia provisto all'anima et al corpo, con ogni charità. Similmente quando vi sarà qualche poverella di detta Compagnia ridotta alla necessità, soccorerla con eleemosine a quel modo che potrà.

5. Che al punto della morte vi siano presenti almen due sorelle quali pareranno a lei.

- 6. Che doppo la morte gli siano fatte le debite essequie, facendolo saper' quanto prima al padre et alla madre della Compagnia.
- 7. Che habbi diligente cura delle novitie insieme con la maestra et collonella, facendo ben pratica de suoi costumi, acciò con buona conscientia possino render testimonianza, quando voranno entrar in capitolo over nella Compagnia.

8. Che si riduca insieme con la maestra et collonella almen ogni quindeci giorni, per il bisogno del suo collonello.

9. Che facci la congrega di tutto'l suo collonello in quella settimana che sarà avisata dalla madre

# "The office of the Mistresses assigned to each district, and what they must remember and teach the virgins.

1. To remind them above all that they should have the fear of God, observing his commandments and those of his holy Church, taking delight in mental and vocal prayer as the Rule says.

2. That they should show the respect that is due to their father and

mother, or to others who have charge of them.

3. That they should live in charity with all those in their house, taking delight especially in patience.

4. That they should have conversation only with good, honest women,

and not with men more than is necessary.

- 5. That they should give scandal to no-one by their speech or by any unsuitable action.
- 6. That they should not linger by doors or windows unnecessarily.
- 7. That they should remain firm in their holy purpose or vow (if they have made it) to keep holy virginity.
- 8. That they should always be clothed in a dress suitable to their profession, according to the Rule, and above all be modestly covered, with shawls that are not transparent.
- 9. That they should frequent the very holy Sacraments of confession and communion, without letting a month pass as the Rule lays down, and after this more or less as recommended by the confessor; and likewise for sermons and readings.
- 10. That they should attend daily mass, and in the case where the church is too far away, or for some other reason, they should follow the advice of the confessor.
- 11. That they should go to Christian instruction or carry out some other pious work, according to the advice of the confessor or of the matron of their district.
- 12. That they should not leave home to go and live with others without due reflection, and they should only do it with the advice of the confessor or the matron of their district. And similarly, if they wish to leave one employer to go to another, or one "luogo pio" to go to another.
- 13. That they should not stay in churches more than is necessary, and while they are there, they should behave in a pious fashion and keep custody of the eyes.
- 14. That they should go to the processions and to the general and spe-

della Compagnia, secondo l'ordine di sette collonelli, et tener appresso di sé una poliza de tutti i bisogni a quali non potrà provedere lei insieme con la maestra et collonella, portandola puoi alla congrega generale di tutto'l governo che si farà doppo le congrege particolari". cial assemblies, especially when they have been informed about them by the colonelle; and in the case when they are prevented from going, they should humbly ask dispensation from the said colonella.

15. That they should not go into town outside the aforementioned

times unless it is really necessary.

16. That they should observe the fasts recommended by the Rule, and this according to the advice of the confessor.

17. That they should inform the father of the Company and the district-matron if they change their confessor.

- 18. That they should go to the church appointed for listening to the Rule on the last Sunday of each month.
- 19. That they should ask permission from their matron if they want to go out of the city.
- 20. The mistresses should also be careful to see that the novices are well instructed in the above-mentioned things, and to know their habits well so that they can give the necessary evidence".<sup>52</sup>

<sup>52</sup> SLG, f.256t-v. "L'ufficio delle Maestre deputate sopra ciascun collonello, et quello che deveno aricordar et insegnar alle virgini.

- Avertirle sopra tutto che habbino il timor di Dio, servando i suoi comandamenti et della santa Chiesa, dilettandosi dell'oratione mentale et vocale come dice la Regola.
- 2. Che portino la debita riverenza a loro padri et madri, overo ad altri che di loro hanno governo.

3. Che vivano caritativamente con tutti di casa, dilettandosi sopra tutto della pacientia.

4. Che non conversino se non con donne da bene et honeste, né con huomini se non tanto quanto importa la necessità.

5. Che non scandalizino alcuno con il suo parlare, o in far qualche altro atto disdicevole.

6. Che non vadino su'le porte over finestre senza necessità.

- 7. Che stiano ferme nel santo proposito over voto (se l'hanno fatto) di servar la santa virginità.
- 8. Che vadino vestite d'un habito convenevole a tal professione, secondo la Regola, et sopra tutto ben coperte, con i panetti che non siano transparenti.
- 9. Che frequentino i Santissimi Sacramenti della confession'et communione, non lasciando mai passar il mese secondo la Regola, et puoi più et mancho secondo il giudicio del suo confessore, et similmente le prediche et lettioni.

10. Che vadino a messa ogni dì, et caso che la chiesa fusse troppo lontana, o qualche altro rispetto,

piglii il conseglio del confessore.

- 11. Che vadino alla institution christiana, overo essercitino qualche altra opera pia secondo il conseglio del confessore, over madonna del suo collonello.
- 12. Che vadino molto pesamente nel partirsi da casa sua et andar a star con altri, et questo con conseglio del suo confessore, o madonna del suo collonello. Similmente quando vogliono partirsi da una patrona, et andar a star con un'altra, overo da un luogo pio et andar in un'altro.

13. Che non stiano nelle chiese fuora di necessità, et nel tempo che gli stanno, vi stiano devotamente

et con gli occhi mortificati.

- 14. Che vadino alle processioni et congrege universali et particolari quando saranno avisate dalle collonelle; et caso che siano impedite, con humiltà faranno far l'escusation da detta collonella.
- Che fuori del sudetto tempo non vadino per la città, se non tanto quanto importa la necessità.
   Che servino i digiuni che eshorta la Regola, et questo secondo la discrettion del confessore.
- 17. Che quando mutano confessore, lo facciano intender al padre della Compagnia et madonna del suo collonello.
- 18. Che ogni ultima domenica del mese vadino alla chiesa deputata ad ascoltar la Regola.

These rules were completed by the procedure approved by the government of the Company on 24 March 1573,<sup>53</sup> and then recorded in the Secondo Libro Generale with the following titles: "Modello circa il fare la congrega generale per tutto il governo della Compagnia di Santa Orsola" and "Modello circa il fare le congrege particolari di ciascun collonello".<sup>54</sup>

The institutionalisation of the government was thus completed. It now consisted of 31 members, namely: "The father general and the mother general, the four men-governors, the four agents, one of whom will be the chancellor, seven matrons ..., seven mistresses and seven colonelle". The Merician hierarchy which numbered the mother, then the virgin-colonelle and the matrons, and finally the four men, had been reversed.

It is true that the men (governors and agents) intervened "only when it is a matter of dealing with temporal things, or to make enquiries about the rights of the Company and to defend them", 56 but in the official listing they preceded the women. What is more, it was now the father, or his delegate, who "having been informed about the matters that have to be seen to ... will be responsible for taking each one in turn and for seeing that each is voted upon by the government with the ballot-box".57

The procedure for the district-meetings added very little to the earlier rules regarding the duties of the three governors; the matron sat on a higher chair between the colonella and the mistress ("la collonella parechiarà una schagna un puoco grande per la madonna, et due un poco più basse, per la maestra et per lei ai lati di detta madonna"); she dealt with the order of the day, made enquiries about how the maidens were learning and observing the Rule; she imposed any penances if necessary on the negligent; she gave out any information and, with the other two governors, she took any decisions needed to meet the needs of each of the maidens.

<sup>19.</sup> Che quando vogliono andar fuori della città dimandino licentia alla loro madonna.

<sup>20.</sup> Saranno ancora diligenti le maestre ad instruer'ben le novitie delle sopradette cose, et far ben pratica de suoi costumi per puoterne render la debita testimonianza".

53 Ibid., f.152v.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>54</sup> Ibid., respectively on ff.270r-v and 272r-v. These texts were published by T. LEDÓCHOWSKA, Angela, op. cit., II, pp.376-381.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., f.270r. "Il padre e la madre generali, i quattro governatori, i quattro agenti de quali uno sia cancelliero, sette madonne... sette maestre et sette collonelle".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>56</sup> Ibid. "non intervengono se non quando si ha da trattar de cose temporali, overo per consultar et diffender le raggioni di detta Compagnia".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>57</sup> Ibid., f.270v. "informato delle cose che fa bisogno di trattare... le incominciarà a proponere ad una per una, facendole anche deliberare da esso governo ad una per una, a bossole et balotte".

The mistress was accountable for the formation of the maidens to the practice of the Rule and of the ordinances, according to the instructions laid down in her own "directory", but the latter were only a synthesis of the disciplinary rules taken from the Rule, updated to meet changing times and new customs. Formerly, when the virgin-colonella carried out the office of local superior, and the *Ricordi* was her manual of government, her programme of action consisted of formation, both preliminary and ongoing, and of evaluation.

Why was it felt necessary to make room for a third office, that of the new "colonelle"? It is likely that this function had already been – or was intended to be – subdivided in practice. But the duties could not have been very clear even to the legislator, since – as we have seen – these instructions were never written down in the Secondo Libro Generale.

According to the "Modelli circa il fare le congrege" which we have quoted, it appears that the "colonelle are like the sentinels and guardians of these young girls", and they had the duty of seeing that the maidens knew about the date and place of meetings, of preparing the room for the meeting and of giving the necessary explanations for the absences.

One can understand why the legislator of the reformed Rule, at the time of Cardinal Borromeo, found himself in a quandary over this member of government who could be equally a virgin or a widow; and one can understand why he changed the title of "colonella" to "avvisatrice", assigning to her the role precisely of a visitor charged with "observing the behaviour of each one, and of giving a detailed account of it to the lady-governor and mistress under whose jurisdiction they come, so that, when necessary, they may direct them and correct them every time they stray from the straight path".58 The role of the "avvisatrice", therefore, was to inform the other two members about the behaviour of the maidens and to let the maidens know about the date and venue of the meetings. After which, and this was an inconsistency on the part of the legislator as he did not have at hand any detailed instructions for this new government figure, he assigned to her the Ricordi as her programme of action, those Counsels which Angela had dictated for the virgincolonelle of the Company.

The instructions for the "maestre" refer to the prescription about wearing a "suitable dress" as laid down in the Rule. In 1572 there was probably still no uniform dress worn by the members of the Company,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>58</sup> Regola, Brescia 1582, cit., Ch.20, "Dell'Avisatrici". "Avertire gli andamenti in particolare di tutte, et darne minute informationi a quella governatrice et maestra sotto la quale sono sottoposte, acciò che, quando sarà bisogno, possino reggerle et rindrizzarle dovunque mancassero della via retta".

but there certainly was in the last years of the government of Isabetta Prato. A "Memoriale per la Compagnia di S. Orsola di Brescia",<sup>59</sup> drawn up for the use of the apostolic visitor Charles Borromeo, when Isabetta Prato was the mother general, reveals the difficulties encountered by the

Company on account of some scandals and certain abuses.

It says in the text: "It is true that there are some, just a few among such a large number, who have given some scandal (which has only happened very rarely), and it is for this reason that the common people have seized the opportunity to hold them in poor esteem and to say all manner of bad things about them. In addition to this, the habit which the said mother had given them, as she had no authority to forbid it to them since it had spread not only among young girls who are not entering the Company but also among widows (and what is more, even women of illrepute have been seen dressed in the said habit); as a result, seeing these all dressed in the same habit, the people have got the idea that they all have the same vocation, and so whatever these others do is attributed to the Company as a body, and for this reason it is no longer held in such high esteem as before. That is why the present mother of the said Company and all her government, fearing that this affair will give rise to much prejudice against the Company, and dishonour to God, if it is allowed to continue, have prayed about it many times, beseeching the Lord that he provide the remedy which he thinks the best". 59b

The Regola which would afterwards be published at Brescia "revista, corretta et confirmata da mons. ill.mo Carlo cardinale di S. Prassede", recalls the fundamental regulations in the Merician Rule concerning dress; it states clearly that the habit must be black, that the leather cincture must be worn and the "veletta", a kind of small triangular shawl of linen material; it threatens with excommunication any virgin who does not remove this habit if she has made herself unworthy of it". 60 Such was the "remedy" which Isabetta had prayed about and which Cardinal Borromeo had considered to be "the best".

59 ASDM, sezione X, Visita pastorale cit., vol.13, p.2.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>59h</sup> "È vero che, per esservene in tanto numero trovata alcuna che ha datto qualche scandolo (il che di raro è occorso), per questo il vulgo ha preso occasione di puoi havergli puoca divotione et dirne ogni male. Oltra di questo, il suo proprio habito, il quale la detta madre gli havea datto, per non haver potestà di farli prohibitione sendosi dilatato non solamente nelle vergini che non entrano nella Compagnia, ma ancora nelle vedoe, (anci di più: se ne siano trovate di quelle di mala fama vestite di detto habito); da qui è nasciuto che, pensandosi il vulgo che l'uniformità del vestire fussero tutte d'una medesima vocatione, ogni cosa che vedono in queste altre l'attribuiscono al corpo di detta Compagnia, et per questa caggione non vien esser havuta in quella consideratione che prima era. Per tanto la madre presente di detta Compagnia con tutto 'l governo, temendo che col longo andare questa cosa generi grande pregiudicio a detta Compagnia, con dishonor de Dio, n'hanno più e più volte fatta oratione, pregando il Signore gli voglia porre quel rimedio che gli pare più espediente".

<sup>60</sup> Regola, Brescia 1582 cit., pp.10-11.

# c) The intervention of Cardinal Borromeo

The evening of 24 February 1580, Cardinal Charles Borromeo, archbishop of Milan, arrived at Brescia to carry out his apostolic visit of

the city and the diocese.

He himself had set up in Milan in 1567 a confraternity under the title of "Compagnia di S. Orsola", in whose Rule we searched in vain for the memory and the spirit of Angela Merici. It was only in the following editions that the extract from Landini's letter, 1 containing his brief sketch of the Foundress, would be added to the text of the Rule, as an appendix.

When Charles Borromeo arrived at Brescia, the Company's structures were no longer exactly the same as the original ones; they had evolved, especially during the preceding decade. Side by side with the "spiritual director for all", 2 two figures with ever-increasing importance had emerged, namely the two priest-executors of the Bull, now looked upon as the "conservators of the Company"; to these must also be added the substitute for the spiritual director. The matrons now had taken the leading role in the districts; the role of the virgin-governors had been divided; some of the government offices had been spelt out in detail; with the allocation of the matrons to a single district each, the autonomy of the mother general seemed to be reinforced.

But the Rule which was in force (the one which had been printed by Turlino) did not contain any of that. It was probably the discrepancy between the codified law and the practice which made Charles Borromeo

take steps to see that the Rule was reformed.

We do not know who was responsible for the manuscript of Chapters 11 to 26 (non-existent in Angela's Rule) which is to be found in the Diocesan Historical Archives at Milan, in Vol.13 of the acts of the pastoral visit. Charles Borromeo put his signature to this manuscript: "Carolus Cardinalis tituli Sanctae Praxedis archiepiscopus et visitator apostolicus". Nor can we tell who touched up the preceding chapters, which in fact did belong to the Merician Rule, since the manuscript containing the alterations has not been found.

At all events, the Rule thus modified – modified that is, in the spiritual chapters, but completely changed in those on government – was

62 D3, Chapter on Confession.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. infra, Ch.V, 3.d.

<sup>63</sup> ASDM, Archivio Spirituale, sez.X, Visita pastorale e documenti aggiunti, Brescia 1580, vol.13.

printed by Pietro Maria Marchetti in 1582.64

The "matrons" and the "maestre" feature there, and also the instructions prescribed for the exercise of their office; in them there is an

echo of the rules already applied in Isabetta Prato's time.

The chapter on the "Avisatrici" had the Ricordi added on as an appendix. This was a far from happy match, but even more serious than this unsuitable combination was the modification the text had undergone. A critical reading of the variants alongside the original text would throw into relief the impoverishment inflicted on Merician spirituality and the rupture of that wise balance between the letter and the spirit which characterises the Writings of the "Madre".

It must also be remembered that Cardinal Borromeo belonged to the post-Tridentine Church, in which the bishop was becoming increasingly important as the pivot of diocesan pastoral life. In line with the leit-motiv of his own legislation "nihil sine episcopo",65 Charles Borromeo imposed on the Company - or had imposed - the authority of the local bishop, not only as pastor, but also as superior: "Seeing that the Council of Trent earnestly recommends to the Bishops that they take care of the virgins who live in the monasteries under a regular rule, so it is that the Bishops and pastors should take no less care of the virgins who have decided to preserve their virginity for the glory of God while still living at home; and possibly they need to take even greater care of these, seeing that the dangers are greater and more numerous for the latter than for the former. Consequently, the Company of the virgins who serve under the name of St Ursula, recognising and regarding as Father, Pastor and Superior the present Bishop of Brescia and his legitimate successors, submits to the obedience of his very reverend Lordship, and recommends itself to his paternal and pastoral care".66

The authority of the bishop had been unquestionably affirmed by Angela Merici: "you must obey your bishop and shepherd",67 in recogni-

65 Cf. MOLINARI, Domenico Bollani e Carlo Borromeo, op. cit., pp.110-111.

Regola, Chapter on Obedience; D3.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>64</sup> A copy signed by Cardinal Borromeo is at Brescia, in the Archives of the Monastery of the Ursu-

<sup>66</sup> Regola, Brescia 1582, cit., Ch.11, p.28. "Si come raccommanda strettamente a Vescovi il Concilio di Trento la cura delle vergini ch'in disciplina regolare vivono ne' monasterii, così dovranno i Vescovi et pastori non minor cura havere de quelle vergini ch'hanno deliberato, vivendo in casa propria, conservar la lor virginità a gloria di Dio; et forsi tanto maggiore dev'essere, quanto di queste sono maggiori et di più sorte, che non sono di quelle i pericoli. Per questo la Compagnia delle vergini, che militano sotto il nome di S. Orsola, riconoscendo et osservando come Padre, Pastore et Superiore il Vescovo presente di Brescia et suoi legittimi successori, all'obedienza di Sua Signoria reverendissima si sottomette, et alla paterna et pastorale cura sua si raccomanda".

tion of the legitimate priority of the local ordinary; but she had never attributed to him the title of "superior". Cardinal Borromeo did not specify the nature of the bishop's role as superior, and possibly he did not intend to be explicit about it; he was superior in as far as he was the one with primary responsibility in the diocese and in its ecclesiastical life with its numerous works of charity.

But at the same time, the imposition of a vicar as a substitute, justified on grounds of the bishop's multiplicity of pastoral commitments, suggested some kind of direct participation of the ordinary in the government. And this could give rise to some ambiguous interpretations: "And because the episcopal care of such a large Diocese does not permit being involved directly in all the affairs of this Company, which would be desirable for its preservation and good progress, there must be a special vicar for this Company, a father whom all will accept as father and superior, proposed by his very reverend Lordship and elected in his place, and to whom they will render all the obedience that is fitting".68

It remains to understand the nature of this authority of "father and superior". The reformed Rule simply says: "The matrons who belong to the government of the said Company cannot hold meetings without the said father being present or without his commission and approval; and anything which has been decided without his consent or at a meeting at

which he is not present, will not be valid".69

It was certainly authority in the broad sense of the word; neither the bishop nor his vicar could be considered, it seems, as internal superiors of the Company; their authority was not a substitute for the authority which Angela had given to the virgins and matrons (and which was amply codified in the chapters dedicated to them); nor did it encroach on their authority in daily practice; it was directed solely to safeguarding "the preservation and good progress" of the Company.

The vagueness in the formulation of the role of the "father and superior", together with an inadequate understanding of the respect due to the priest, might have been the reason for some over-stepping of boundaries, abuses, attitudes of resignation: on one hand, unwarranted

<sup>69</sup> Ibid. "Non potranno le madonne, che sono al governo di detta Compagnia, fare congregatione senza la presenza di detto padre, o senza sua commissione et approbatione, et però nulla sarà tutto quello ch'in altra congregatione nella qual'egli non intervenga, o senza suo consenso, sarà deter-

minato".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>68</sup> Regola, Brescia 1582, cit., Ch.12. "Et perché non comporta la cura vescovale di tanta gran Diocese immediatamente occuparsi in tutte le cose di questa Compagnia, come converrebbe per la conservatione et buon progresso d'essa, è necessario che sia un vicario particolare sopra di questa Compagnia; qual padre tutt'accetteranno come padre et superiore da Sua Signoria reverendissima proposto, et eletto in suo luogo, et a cui renderanno tutta l'obedienza che conviene".

interference on the part of some ecclesiastics, and on the other, abdication of the rights and duties proper to the exercise of government on the part of some superiors.

When Bishop Paolo Leone introduced the Company of St Ursula in Ferrara, he would impose on it a Rule largely inspired by the Brescian Rule reformed by Charles Borromeo, but he would not dare change the original features, namely those of an institute with a feminine government, so typically Merician in its respect for the dignity and capabilities of women.

Thus he laid down: "So that the Company of St Ursula may be well governed, those responsible for the government must be persons of quality, who will serve as mistresses and guides of the maidens along the path of the spiritual life, and as mothers of all; they will be zealous for their well-being and advantage, doing their best to see that they live their virginal life as they should and that they bear fruit in the spiritual life, and giving them all the help they can, as will be pointed out in the chapters devoted to each one.

"They will be chosen from among the virgins most mature in age, the most exemplary in conduct, the oldest and most experienced in the Company; or even among the widows possessing these same qualities if there are not enough virgins suitable for the task. But in the case where a virgin would be as suitable as a widow, the virgin must always be preferred to the widow, and the widow to a married woman, if in the case of necessity or of outstanding holiness of life any have been accepted; apart from this exception, every step will be taken to ensure that no married woman is admitted".<sup>70</sup>

Later, with regard to the episcopal authority, Bishop Leone would limit himself to recalling: "The Head of not only this Government but of the entire Company, as indeed he is over all other pious works, will be the Prelate of the city, from whom it must expect all favour and author-

"Queste saranno vergini, ma di età più mature, e di costumi più esemplari, e delle più antiche e prattiche della Compagnia: o vero vedove delle medesime conditioni, non havendone delle vergini sufficienti. Sempre però, stante la medesima bontà nell'una e nell'altra, s'ha da preferire la vergine alla vedova, e la vedova alla maritata, se per caso di necessità o di gran bontà se ne accettasse; fuor

del quale caso si farà quanto si potrà, perché non s'ammetta alcuna maritata".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>70</sup> Regole della Compagnia delle Vergini di Santa Orsola stampate per ordine del molto Ill. et R.mo mons. Paolo Leone vescovo di Ferrara, in Ferrara per Vittorio Baldini, 1587, "Ordini del Governo", pp.1-2. "Accioché la Compagnia di S. Orsola sia ben governata, è necessario che vi siano alcune persone di qualità per Governo, le quali serviranno per maestre, e guide delle vergini nella via et vita spirituale, e come madri di tutte; essendo sollecite circa il bene et utilità loro, procurando che vivino bene in questo stato virginale, e facciano frutto nella via spirituale, dando loro tutti quelli aiuti che potranno, come si dirà nei capitoli di ciascuna.

ity". 71 But he did not assign to this prelate any place among the members of the government, nor did he introduce any other priest. The Rule of Ferrara with its "Ordini del Governo" was in this respect closer to Angela's authentic conception than the reformed Rule of Brescia, and it was this Rule which, translated into French and published at Tournon in 1597, would give birth to the Company of St Ursula beyond the Alps.

One particular merit of the reformed Rule of Brescia deserves to be mentioned, the introduction of the mother general's four assistants. Thanks to them, a part of the primitive collegial government body was restored, that part which initially had consisted of the "matrons" with responsibility for the whole Company, but which had been splintered at the time of Isabetta Prato by the allocation of a district to each matron, with the risk of setting up round the mother a sphere of autonomy conducive to certain forms of absolutism.

An analytical study of this Brescian Rule and a comparative study with the Turlino edition and the Trivulzian manuscript, would serve to highlight the superiority of the authentic Merician Rule with regard to the revised version ordered by Charles Borromeo. On the other hand, a thorough reconstruction of the situation of the Company in the years which immediately preceded the apostolic visit might help to reduce to more reasonable proportions the charges laid against the reforming Cardinal, charges which have become a commonplace.

Charles Borromeo had his decrees and ordinances conveyed to Caterina Chizzola and to the other matron-governors by a notarial act dated 11 October 1581.72 As for the Rule, the mother-general received the official notification nearly a year later. On Monday, 2 July 1582, the reverend doctor Carlo Agostini was sent by Cardinal Borromeo to Caterina Chizzola's house "et eidem dedit, intimavit et praesentavit regulas Congregationis virginum Sanctae Ursulae ab eodem ill.mo Domino reformatas et approbatas, quas dicta magnifica Domina alacri animo et nomine totius congregationis recepit...".73

It was the Rule consisting of a prologue and 26 chapters which would take its place in historiography as "Regola della Compagnia di Sant'Orsola di Brescia" supplanting the real Rule of Angela Merici. Even the recovery, at the time of the processes of beatification, of possi-

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p.2. "Il Capo non solo di questo Governo, ma di tutta la Compagnia, come anche suol'essere di tutte l'altre opere pie, sarà il Prelato della città, dal quale deve aspettare ogni favore e autorità".

AV, Religiosi, 27/2.
 ASDM, Visita pastorale, cit., vol.13, f.6.

bly the authentic manuscript – as we shall see<sup>74</sup> – and of the Turlino edition,<sup>75</sup> did not help to restore Angela's Rule to its rightful place of priority in Merician literature.

Both the manuscript Rule and the printed one became lost after the processes. This can be gathered from the following fact: in his *Vita*, published in 1807, Salvatori stated that he had not been able to find either the original of the Rule or an authentic copy of it. The manuscript is irreparably lost, no doubt; the printed Rule of the 16th century was recovered round about 1930. We will return to the subject in Chapter V of this final section.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. infra, Ch.IV, 2.c.

<sup>75</sup> DONEDA, Vita, op. cit., p.150.

<sup>76</sup> SALVATORI, Vita, op. cit., p.161. Cf. infra, Ch.V, 1.d.

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# Chapter IV THE CANONICAL PROCESSES

#### 1. THE PRELIMINARIES

A period of 267 years was to elapse between the death of Angela and her canonisation in St Peter's. This long wait was due in part to the lengthy procedure, complicated by the multiplicity of norms introduced after the promulgation of Urban VIII's Decrees; and afterwards, progress was further hindered by an event of far-reaching consequence, the French Revolution.

The process consisted of various stages. We are presenting here, for the first time, a systematic account, although brief, of the order of events. We would like to point out, by the way, that the *Atti dei Processi*, the manuscript ones as well as the printed, could provide the subject-material for an important monographic study.

# a) In the 16th century

The first authoritative reference to the sanctity of Angela is to be found in the "Confirmatio" of Bishop Ferretti, dated 19 May 1545 and printed in the appendix to the Regola in Turlino's edition: "cognoscentes devotionem S. quondam Mulieris". Here, and in two other places in the same document, the abbreviation "S." replaces the word "Sanctae".

This same Decree is included, with the same abbreviation, in the printed edition of the reformed Regola of Charles Borromeo (Brescia 1582 and Brescia 1620) and in the one revised by Faino (Bologna 1672). But in the Regola restored by Cristoni (Brescia 1673), the "S." has been replaced by a "Ven.", in line with the Decrees promulgated by Urban VIII about attributing the titles of Blessed and Saint without the official recognition of the Church. This is further proof that also for Cristoni the abbreviation "S." certainly stood for "Saint".

<sup>1</sup> D2 and D3.

And this is how it was interpreted by the witnesses interrogated at the diocesan process at Brescia; they quoted Ferretti's "Confirmatio" as

an attestation by a bishop of Angela's sanctity.2

Carlo Doneda, with his high degree of competency, confirms the interpretation of "Sanctae" given by the Brescian witnesses. The Secondo Libro Generale, on the other hand, expands the "S." and says "supradictae".

In 1568, Giovan Battista Nazari, after he had completed the biographical pages at the behest of the lady-governors of the Company, entitled his manuscript Libro della Reverenda et quasi Beata Madre Suor Angela...4. The expression "quasi Beata" was certainly intentional. It indicated a first step along the official path leading to the canonical proclamation of Angela's sanctity, and the Brescian notary did not fail to recall that everything had been done with the full approval of Bishop Domenico Bollani. It is not for nothing that Nazari, before he started writing, had arranged for a proper "Process" to take place, carried out according to the procedure and duly recorded, with interrogation of four evewitnesses under oath in the presence of other witnesses sworn in. These four men had their own different and very personal way of expressing themselves, and this explains the diversity of style between the four depositions, each of them striking an individual note. It is a pity that Nazari did not question some of the members of the Company; testimonies from women would have helped to provide an approach from a different and richly complementary angle.

Two years earlier, Francesco Landini had written a private letter to Father Visdomini, in which, referring to Angela, he had said that she was "di santità nobile e famosa". This opinion, expressed within a limited circle, was to come out of it and appear in the editions of the Regola printed at Milan (in 1569, p.27; in 1570, f.[14r]; in 1585, f.12v; in the Acta Ecclesiae Mediolanensis of 1582, f.338v), as the already mentioned extract from this letter was published there.

In 1581, "St Charles Borromeo ... made it very clear that he intended to obtain her canonisation from the Vicar of Christ (because of certain miracles which happened after her death); this is attested by

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> For example Gaspare Bocca, who adds: "as one can see in the original kept in the Archives of the Company". (APC. Vat. 340, f.95r); Canon Girolamo Pedrocca (ibid., f.227v); Francesco Dalola, theological adviser to the Holy See at Brescia (ibid., f.325r).

DONEDA, Vita, op. cit., p.93.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> D17.

<sup>5</sup> D15.

Gondi and Ottavio Ermanni ..., confidant and friend of the same St Charles, book 3, ch. 15 of the Life of the Venerable Alessandro Luzzago printed in Brescia".<sup>6</sup>

In 1584, it was said, Sixtus V had "répondu à une supplique de l'évêque de Ferrare en donnant l'autorisation de rendre un culte public aux reliques d'Angèle Merici". We have no reference to this fact in any of the documents which we consulted, nor any other Decree. The dedication "Al christiano lettore" of the Rule of Ferrara speaks only of Sixtus V's confirmation of the Company of St Ursula in that town, a confirmation granted "with a wealth of spiritual treasures of numerous holy indulgences". 8

We know, however, about another Decree from the same Pontiff, a document frequently quoted as recognising in some way Angela's sanctity. In actual fact, by this Brief of 26 June 1587, addressed to the minister and the Capuchin friars of the convent of S. Giovanni di Barbarano, in the territory of Salò, Sixtus V was simply authorising the donation to their church of the relics of some saints and martyrs buried in the monastery of S. Salvatore (otherwise known as St Afra). The Brief mentions a few names only, but the authorisation also covered the removal of others, according to the devotion of the Capuchins.

And so, on 20 April 1589, various selected relics were handed over to Father Mattia Bellintani by virtue of the pontifical Brief and by an official act drawn up by the notary Antonio fu Martino Piazza. Among these relics there was a "modicum os de corpore Beatae Angelae existente in ecclesia inferiori a parte Aquilonis prope altare S. Caloceri".

On 7 May 1589, these relics were solemnly transferred to the Capuchin church of Barbarano, with an imposing throng of dignitaries and faithful and to the sound of bells and trumpets. A public document of this transfer was drawn up by Pietro Alberti da Toscolano, member of the college of notaries at Salò. From that time onwards the relic of Angela Merici also became an object of public cult and her title of Blessed was implicitly confirmed.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> APC, Positio super dubio an constet de Virtutibus etc.., Summarium n.22, p.377; LOMBARDI, Vita, op. cit., p.288. The "positiones" correspond, as has already been said, to the different stages of the process of canonisation at the Roman Curia.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> MÈRE MARIE DE CHANTAL GUEUDRÉ, OSU, Histoire de l'Ordre des Ursulines en France, tome II, "Les Monastères d'Ursulines sous l'Ancien Régime", Paris 1960, p.514. Ch.X, "La béatification d'Angèle Mérici", is an excellent synthesis of the expectations and hopes of the French monasteries and of the way they shared in the ups and downs of the processes for Angela's canonisation. Mother Gueudré, always so careful and attentive in naming her sources, has not given the origin of this piece of information. There is certainly no trace of it in the AGUUR.

<sup>8</sup> Regola, Ferrara, 1587, f.7r.

Sixtus V's Brief and the notarial acts which followed were transcribed into the Acts of the diocesan Process of Brescia, as proof of the reputation for sanctity which Angela had enjoyed at that period; such a

transcription virtually ratified this reputation.

An enquiry into the frequency of the name "Angela" in Brescia could also lead to some interesting conclusions. Relying on the numerous "polizze d'estimo" which we consulted and studied, we are able to say that this name was not very widespread in the town. In the baptismal register of St Afra, however, there is evidence of the name occurring more frequently after the years 1580-1590, in other words after the transfer of Angela's body to the main chapel of the crypt of St Afra and the erection of a new tomb.

# b) In the 17th century

The canonical processes of the 17th century bear the imprint of the Decrees of Urban VIII, which promulgated a detailed set of laws with regard to the procedure to be followed in the causes of canonisation.

The Decree of 13 March 1625 deplores the established abuses in paying public veneration to persons not yet declared blessed or saints by the Apostolic See; it gives orders for the removal of all exterior signs of devotion and threatens those not obeying with ecclesiastical punishments. It adds, however, the possibility of one exception: "Per suprascripta praeiudicare in aliquo non vult, neque intendit, iis qui aut per communem Ecclesiae consensum, vel immemorabilem temporis cursum, aut per Patrum virorumque Sanctorum scripta, vel longissimi temporis scientia, ac tolerantia Sedis Apostolicae vel Ordinarii coluntur". 10

The Decree of 5 July 1634 confirms the preceding rules; it recalls all that had already been suggested in the Decree of 2 October 1625, namely that images, pictures and other devotional signs should be kept "in secreto aliquo seorsum ab ecclesia loco" until the eventual pronouncement by the Holy See. Then it sets forth the procedures to be followed for carrying out the canonical processes and makes it clear that "the immemorial space of time", which is mentioned in the preceding Decree, must cover at least 100 years (Angela's death went back only 96 years!). Furthermore, it invalidates any process which might have contravened in some way the norms contained in the Decrees.<sup>11</sup>

9 APC, Vat. 340, ff.594r-597v; 598r-604v.

Decreta et Ordo conficiendi processus in causis beatificationis et canonizationis Sanctorum S.D.N. Urbani VIII iussi editus, Romae, ex Typographia Reverendae Camerae Apostolicae, 1642, B. Vat, Stamp. Barb., H.H. I.81, pp.2-6.
Il Ibid., pp.7-16.

Urban VIII also established the procedures which the Sacred Congregation of Rites itself had to follow to ensure the validity of the processes; and finally he published certain obligatory formulas (oath formulas which the various persons involved in the processes would be expected to take).

At that same time in France, where the Order of St Ursula had been born in 1612 from the evolution of the first little clusters of virgins living by the Rule of Ferrara, the Ursuline monasteries were multiplying rapidly. Each monastery had had its own foundress, but "Blessed Angela" was not forgotten: she was to be found represented either in a painting or in a statue, dressed sometimes as a tertiary and sometimes as an Ursuline. Even where no community act of devotion had been imposed in her honour, the personal devotion of the religious remained very much alive.

Mother de Pommereu, who belonged to the "Congregation" (in other words, the branch) of Paris, published the *Chroniques de l'Ordre* in 1673. She prefaced them with a short article on "L'origine de cet Ordre dans le martyre de Sainte Ursule et de ses Compagnes", and a short extract from Quarré's work, *La vie de la Mère Angèle de Bresse...*, already mentioned by us.<sup>12</sup>

From the first pages we extract this remark: "Elle [Sainte Ursule] est la racine de ce grand arbre, si agréable dans le jardin de l'époux; la Bienheureuse Angèle en est le tronc, et toutes les Ursulines les branches,

qui portent des fruits savoureux et utiles" (p.11).

Through the most outstanding biographical details, such as those highlighted by Father Quarré, these *Chroniques* were to make the "fondatrice de l'Ordre des Ursulines" familiar to all Ursuline religious, and at the same time they nourished both the admiration and the devotion of the religious. Some of their Constitutions fixed a general communion on the day believed to be the anniversary of Angela's death, and sometimes even a fast on the eve of the day; in some monasteries, a summary of her life or her Writings was read; desewhere it was arranged that there was always one member of the community who was given her name.

<sup>13</sup> It has escaped the attention of Mother de Pommereu here that she is using an expression which juridically is incorrect: Angela founded the *Company* of St Ursula, not the *Order*.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> POMMEREU, MÈRE DE, Les Chroniques, op. cit., première partie, pp.1-20 and pp.21-33. For Quarré, cf. supra, Pt.I, Ch.II, 1.e.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Cf. supra, Pt.I, Ch.II, 1.e. Perhaps also the translation of Gondi's Vita, printed at Liège but lost today. The Rule of Ferrara contained, although with some revisions, the Ricordi. In his Vie, Quarré had printed the translation of the Testamento (pp.546-566) and of the Ricordi (pp.566-582). The Journal des Illustres Religieuses de l'Ordre de Sainte Ursule, avec leurs maximes et pratiques spirituelles, tiré des Chroniques de l'Ordre, et autres mémoires de leur vie, composé par une Religieuse du même Ordre, au

In connection with this we reproduce here a significant page taken from one of the 44 different testimonies, most of them coming from France, reported in the Acts of the Process.<sup>15</sup> It is the testimony from Tours: "We, prioress and religious of the convent of St Ursula of the city of Tours in France, certify to all those who will read the present letters that our community, from the beginning of our institution and establishment in this town up to this present day, has always regarded as blessed the venerable mother Angela Merici, first foundress and institutor of our congregation at Brescia in Italy, known in France under the name and institution and company of the Religious of St Ursula ... In our community, we have always rendered to our blessed Mother foundress an honour, a special devotion although not public ... There has always been the custom among us here, up to this day, of seeing that some member of our community bears the name of St Angela, in memory of our blessed Mother ...".<sup>16</sup>

Mary of the Incarnation, the "mother of the Canadian Church", had likewise made a similar gesture on the other side of the ocean when she gave the name of Angela to one of her most fervent and generous neophytes: "I had the name of our first Mother St Angela given to her, judging this to be fitting for her, since God had converted her in a house of her daughters".<sup>17</sup>

The monastery of Tours, which came from Bordeaux through Saumur, in its 1635 Constitutions already contemplated the fast for the eve of "Sainte Angelle"; a year later it adopted, having it printed for its own use, the same Office of St Ursula which the Ursulines of Orleans, founded also by Bordeaux but through Poitiers, had had printed in 1627. The prayers of this Office provide evidence of the cult rendered to Angela from the earliest days of the Order of St Ursula. The text "ex libro in duodecim impresso Aureliae anno MDCXXVII sub titulo Règles et Constitutions" was reported in the Atti del Processo. 18

Monastère de Bourg-en-Bresse, divisé en quatre parties, à Bourg-en-Bresse, chez Joseph Ravoux imprimeur et libraire, 1684, tome premier, published a short profile of the "Bienheureuse Mère Angelle de Bresse, première institutrice et fondatrice de la Compagnie et Ordre de sainte Ursule en Bresse en Lombardie", and a summary of the *Testamento*, (pp.358-366).

<sup>15</sup> APC. Vat. 340, ff.426r-546v.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., ff.465v-466v.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> MARIE DE L'INCARNATION URSULINE, *Correspondance*, nouvelle édition par Dom Guy Oury, moine de Solesmes, Abbaye Saint-Pierre, Solesmes, 1971, Lettre LXV, de Québec, à la Mère Ursule de Ste-Catherine, Supérieure des Ursulines de Tours, 29 Septembre 1642, p.165. "Notre Mère sainte Angèle" seems to have been an expression already commonly used.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> APC. Vat. 339, ff.486v-491v. Cf. D34. The AGUUR has a copy of the Constitutions of Tours, followed by the Rule and the Regulations, all bound together in one volume with the Petit Office de saincte Ursule vierge et martyre, avec la commémoration de la bien-beureuse Angelle de Merici, Fondatrice du

But also in Angela's own native country the 17th century saw the birth of a lively interest in this compatriot of theirs who had now become famous and to whom, with simplicity, the title of Blessed was

given.

On 3 May 1608, the communal Council of Desenzano approved by unanimous vote the proposal to erect an altar dedicated to their venerable townswoman: "In consideration of the memory evoked and the exhortation made by the very reverend Fr Eustachio, Capuchin preacher, during the last Lenten sermons which he preached in this Commune, to have constructed in our parish church an altar dedicated to St Ursula and to Blessed Angela of Desenzano, so that, as intercessors and protectors of this town before his Divine Majesty, they may pray to him for the safe-keeping of this said town. The very honourable lord Consul requests that those in favour of this said altar being constructed and of the chapel opposite the altar of the venerable confraternity of Corpus Christi being set aside for it and of it being dedicated as indicated above, place the ball in the white box, and those against, in the red one. Put to the vote in this way, the proposal was unanimously adopted, namely, 27 for and 0 against". 19

On 26 November 1608, the communal Council further proposed to elect a person who "in the name of this Commune, will be made responsible for this altar and take great care of it, and of the alms which will be contributed for it ... This proposal having been put forward, it has been decided in the course of the meeting by the above-mentioned honourable Council that this Person should be elected, in honour and praise of the aforesaid St Ursula and Blessed Angela, who must be invoked as Pro-

tectresses of this Commune before his Divine Majesty".<sup>20</sup>
On 7 January 1610, the communal Council put on its agenda for the

day the following proposal: "Seeing that in the council-room of our

saincte Ordre de la Congrégation de la susdite saincte Ursule, a Paris, chez la vefue[!] Nicolas Buon, M.DC.XXXVI.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, f.145r. "persona che per nome di questo Commune debba haver bona cura et custodia di esso altare, et delle elemosine che a quello veniranno fatte... La quale espositione intesa, è stato terminato dal predetto spettabile Consilio dover esser fatta elettione di Persona, come in quella. a laude et honore delle predette Santa Orsola et Beata Angela, quale siano invocate per Protettrice di questo

Commune appresso sua Divina Maestà".

 $<sup>^{19}</sup>$  AACD,  $Liber\ Provisionum\ Q$ , f.136v, today reg. Qa, n.12. "Atteso l'aricordo datto, et essortatione fatta per il rev.do P. Eustachio capucino predicatore nelle sue ultime predicationi quatragesimali passate a questo Commune, di fabricar un altare in questa nostra chiesa parochiale dedicato a Santa Orsola et alla Beata Angela da Desenzano, acciò, come avvocatte et protettrice di questa stessa appresso sua Divina Maestà, possano pregarla per il mantenimento di essa. Il spettabile domino Consule mette parte: a chi piace che detto altare sia fabricato, et a quello assignata la capella posta al'incontro dell'altare della veneranda confraternita del Corpus Domini et dedicato ut supra, metta la balla nel bianco, a chi non, nel rosso; la qual balottata restò presa a tutte balle. Videlicet pro 27, contra 0".

commune there is no picture of men or women saints, which seems a pity, for this reason the honourable Consul has put to the said Council the resolution of the Special Council to have the window behind the big bench walled up and to have painted there, by a painter of note, the very holy Pietà, with St Mary Magdalene on one side, and on the other Blessed Angela; this resolution not having been accepted or adopted for various reasons, in particular because in summer it is this window which gives a little ventilation to the house, the honourable noble Consul puts to the vote the proposal that there be made a big painting on canvas, in oil and with fine colours, on which the very holy Pietà will be painted, with St Mary Magdalene on one side and Blessed Angela on the other; and that it will be placed in the room where the honourable Council meets on the top floor; this having been proposed, it was carried unanimously viva voce". 21

On 14 August 1611, the Company of St Ursula obtained, with 24 in favour and 2 against, the right to be buried in front of the altar "of

Blessed Angela in our parish church".22

On 22 March 1620, the Council "with no-one dissenting, delegates the hon. special Council to procure from the reverend Brescian Fathers of St Afra, in whatever way seems best to the said Council, a relic of Blessed Angela, seeing that she was born in this region".<sup>23</sup>

The devotion of the Administrators of the commune and of the people of Desenzano towards their compatriot, expressed in the figurative arts, is also proved by other works described in the Acts of the Process which took place at Verona, as the little lakeside town of Desenzano belonged to the diocese of Verona at that time – and still does.<sup>24</sup>

The 17th century drew to a close, however, without any official steps having been taken towards obtaining a decision on the sanctity of

Angela by the Holy See.

24 D35.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., f.174v. "Non essendo nella sala del Consilio del commune nostro immagine alcuna de Santi né Sante, il che pare non star bene, perciò il sp. Consule espose al predetto Consilio la terminatione del Consilio Speciale, cioè di stopar la finestra di dietro al banco grande, et far ivi depingere – per un pittor valent' huomo – la santissima Pietà, et da una parte santa Maria Maddalena, et dall'altra la Beata Angela; né essendo stata accettata detta terminatione, per raggioni diverse addotta, et particularmente che l'està è detta finestra che dà qualche puoco di spiramento alla casa, perciò il sp. signor Consule mette parte che sii fatto far un quadro grande sopra la tela, con colori fini, a oglio, sopra il qual si debba far depingere la santissima Pietà; et da una parte santa Maria Maddalena, et dall'altra la Beata Angela; da dover esser riposto sopra la casa, et nella sala dove si congrega il sp. Consilio del Commune nostro; la qual parte intesa, fu presa viva voce et niun discrepante".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> Liber Provisionum R, f.141v, in APC. Vat. 340, f.410. "Nemine discrepante delegorono al sp. Consilio speciale di procurar una reliquia della Beata Angela, come Beata nata in questa terra, dalli rev. Padri di Brescia di S. Afra, in quel miglior modo a detto sp. Consilio speciale parerà".

But the Ursulines of the monastery of Dijon had already done something on behalf of their "blessed Foundress"; and they were to do even more by expressing openly their desire to see Angela Merici on the altars and their willingness to promote such an enterprise. They spoke about it with the Flemish Ursulines who had stopped at Dijon on their way to the recently founded monastery at Rome. The religious of Dijon were thus feeding the flame which very rapidly would spread like wild-

fire throughout Europe and even overseas.

The four Ursulines of Mons and the one from Valenciennes had arrived at Dijon on 14 October 1691. In her account of the journey, Mother Ursule-Thérèse-Joseph Vanderstein relates: "Ces vertueuses religieuses nous témoignent un zèle tout particulier pour la canonisation de notre bienheureuse Mère Angèle; ce qu'elles nous marquent en plus d'une rencontre. Il y a longtemps qu'elles ont envoyé à Rome certains mémoires qu'elles avaient, touchant cette bienheureuse institutrice; ce qui prouve assez la sainte passion qu'elles ont d'y contribuer de tout leur pouvoir". And she adds in a foot-note: "L'histoire des Ursulines rapporte qu'en 1618 l'aumônier des Ursulines de Dijon, Charles Albéron, se rendit à Rome et que dans son voyage il visita le tombeau de la vénérable Mère Angèle et vit la fervente communauté de Brescia, toute pleine encore des souvenirs de la sainte fondatrice".<sup>25</sup>

#### 2. THE PROCESS OF BEATIFICATION

The process of Angela Merici was set in motion by an Ursuline of the "venerable monastery of Via Vittoria", as it used to be called at Rome.<sup>26</sup> Natalina Schiantarelli, born at Venice on 20 December 1718,

<sup>25</sup> LORIDAN, J. (Abbé), Les voyages à Rome des Ursulines de Flandre (1684-1732), Tours, Alfred Cattier,

s.d. [after 1896], pp.147-148.

Today the National Conservatoire of St Cecilia. The Ursulines were informed by the Government of the Italian State about the confiscation of their monastery in Via Vittoria-Via de' Greci on 1 November 1873. An inventory was immediately made of the furniture and the vestments, together with the sacred vessels and objects; bonds and archives were seized; but the actual occupation of the Conservatoire took place gradually. The expulsion of the religious and the final confiscation of the property were completed on 26 April 1900. M. MARIE-VIANNEY BOSCHET OSU, Les origines de l'Union Romaine jusqu'à sa fondation (1900), Rome, Maison Généralice de l'U.R. des Ursulines, 1951, p.329. In 1602, there had already been established in Rome a "Congregazione delle Vergini di Santa Orsola in Santa Rufina e Seconda in Trastevere", but it was an institution with a monastic structure although without vows, without any apostolic end and without any resemblance to either the Company or the Order of St Ursula. Its spirituality was in no way marked by Merician influence. It owed its title "of St Ursula" to the fact that one of the two foundresses had stayed a long time in Cologne. Cf. the "Principio della Congregazione di Santa Orsola" in Costituzioni e Regole della Congregazione delle Vergini di Santa Orsola in Santa Rufina e Seconda in Trastevere eretta dalla molto reverenda madre Fran-

had become Suor Maria Luigia di S. Giuseppe, or more commonly Madre Luisa, when she was clothed.<sup>27</sup>

She had received a good education, knew several languages and had accompanied her mother on some journeys through Europe; she also

had exceptional organisational gifts.

While still a young religious, with the help of one of her two Jesuit uncles, she began making a collection of some documents relating to Angela Merici. A fortuitous meeting with Father Girolamo Lombardi encouraged her to devote herself entirely to the cause of the canonisation of her blessed Foundress.

From 1754 onwards,<sup>28</sup> Mother Maria Luisa rallied together all the monasteries of the Order of St Ursula and all the Companies of St Ursula whose addresses she knew, exhorting them to become in their turn promoters of a slowly penetrating movement which would reach all the groups of religious and seculars claiming Angela Merici as their Mother. A vast network of correspondence was flung across Europe, the meshes of which spread as far as Canada, Martinique, Louisiana and Brazil, arousing enthusiasm, impatience, delusions and difficulties. At the same time, the monastery of Rome became a kind of agency to which people turned not only in view of the canonisation cause, not only to ask for pictures and biographies, but also to solicit indults and concessions from the Roman Curia, to obtain indulgences, relics of Roman saints and martyrs, or "agnus Dei".

Out of this vast correspondence, which reached out directly to 196 Ursuline groups, there remain about two thousand letters in the General Archives of the Roman Union of Ursulines. These are at present the subject of an analytical study by Philippe Annaert of Louvain University, a diligent and keen researcher of documentary material in the Ursuline archives and a specialist of the scholastic and educational situation in the 17th and 18th centuries.

The official documentation of the processes, however, is that to be found collected together in two different sets of Acts, one of which is manuscript and the other printed. They both consist of two parts, one with regard to the beatification (we are dealing with it in this section n.2)

cesca Montjoux francese indirizzate dalla Presidente alle sue Figliole, Roma, Biblioteca Nazionale, Mss. Varia 356/3903.

28 BOSCHET, Les origines, op. cit., p.33, especially Ch.II, "Sainte Angèle, l'Ordre et le Monastère

Romain", pp.26-51.

<sup>27</sup> Brevi cenni sulla vita della reverenda Madre Suor Maria Luigia di S. Giuseppe postulatrice della causa di canonizzazione di S. Angela Merici Fondatrice dell'Istituto delle Orsoline, in Roma, 1807, presso Lazzarini stampatore della Rev. Camera Apostolica.

and the other with regard to the canonisation (we will be speaking about it in section n.3).

The first manuscript set, concerned with the beatification, is that of the "processi ordinari", called by this name because they are instituted by the diocesan ordinary. The archetype of these processes should have been kept in the Episcopal Archives of Brescia, but it is no longer there. A complete transcription of it, carefully collated and called "transumptum", was handed over to the Sacred Congregation of Rites, which at that time was the competent dicastery of the Roman Curia for these causes.

This "transumptum" consists of two manuscripts which are now in the Vatican Secret Archives, classified as Sacra Rituum Congregatione Romana seu Brixien. Ven. Servae Dei Angelae Merici fundatricis congregationis Monialium Sanctae Ursulae Beatae nuncupatae Processus 339-340. We refer to them by the abbreviation APC. Vat.

The collection of the documents and the interrogations had to follow to the letter the rules contained in a thick file of "istruzioni" which is to be found today in the Archives of the Patriarchal Seminary at Venice.<sup>29</sup>

The second manuscript set, concerning the canonisation, already forms part of the "apostolic processes", called this because they are established by delegation of the Apostolic See. Their "transumptum", in the Vatican Secret Archives, consists of four manuscripts: Sacra Rituum Congregatione Brixien. Canonizationis Beatae Angelae Merici Fundatricis Societatis S. Ursulae Processus Apostolicus super virtutibus et miraculis in specie, which we indicate by the abbreviation APC. Vat. 341-344.<sup>30</sup>

The two printed sets, concerned respectively with the beatification and the canonisation, contain the acts of the "apostolic processes" held in the Roman Curia. They are booklets in large format and there is a complete series of them in the Bibliothèque Nationale at Paris, bound together in several volumes, catalogued H.669-673. In this section n.2, we will be dealing with the first set.

<sup>29</sup> "Istruzione" per il Processo di Brescia e documenti per la Beatificazione della fondatrice delle Orsoline Angela Merici, in 137 fogli manoscritti r-v, ASPV, sala Monico, XXa, 345/2.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> Certain booklets of the Process of Canonisation (those corresponding to vol. APC. Vat. 341) are in the Archives of the Filippini Fathers of Brescia. Missing, though, are those which contain the transcription, among other things, of the *Ricordi*, *Testamento*, *Epistola confortatoria* and *Dichiarazione della Bolla*, Nazari's Writings, Bellintani's *Vita*, the Act of Angela's election. But in these Archives there are the booklets corresponding to vol.344 of the APC. Vat.

# 2) In the diocese of Rome

A canonical process of beatification-canonisation forms a unity, but the judicial enquiries can spread over several dioceses, as the need arises. For Angela Merici, the principal process took place in the diocese of Brescia; an enquiry was likewise conducted by a rogatory commission in the diocese of Rome.

This phase of the process opened on 10 October 1757, with the establishment of a diocesan tribunal in the Ursuline monastery. It was responsible for the interrogation of the witnesses (eight members of the community) and the examination of the iconographic, manuscript and printed documents, drawn from the archives or collected for the occasion.

This process constituted a classic "processus de casu excepto", in other words of the special case provided for by the Decrees of Urban VIII, that of a process founded on a cult paid from time immemorial, supported likewise by a time-honoured reputation for sanctity. The documentation and the interrogations followed two lines of enquiry: the reputation for sanctity and the cult paid to Angela Merici immediately after her death.

As far as her life was concerned, the Ursuline religious related all that they had learnt from reading Gondi, Quarré, Faino, in his printed edition of 1672 and in the manuscript sent to the Elector of Bavaria (which we spoke about when dealing with this author), and also the Chronicles of the Order of St Ursula. What they lacked was the contribution of a tradition outside their cloistered world and some kind of direct contact with the Brescian background. Their knowledge therefore was exclusively literary in origin, and it suffered from the absence of a historiography which could prune the platitudes and reconstruct the figure of "blessed Angela" in her real historical setting.

But the awareness that the Ursulines had of being the daughters of Angela Merici, even if it was through an indirect route, was more and more beyond discussion.

Even Mother Luisa's attorney, Signor Domenico Troiani, "specialiter constitutus ad docendum de cultu publico", in his articles prepared for the interrogation, did not hesitate to recall how Cardinal François de Sourdis, archbishop of Bordeaux, had had the inspiration, when he was praying at the tomb of Charles Borromeo, of establishing the Company of St Ursula in his diocese, how he had instituted a Congregation of Ursulines in 1606, and how he had changed them into cloistered nuns in 1618, "without, however, prejudicing in any way the original spirit of

the Institute founded by Blessed Angela".31

Strong in their age-long devotion and sure of having received the spiritual legacy of Angela Merici, the Ursuline religious recognised in her their "Mother and Foundress". This awareness became increasingly strong in the monasteries, as the cause of canonisation compelled them to delve ever deeper into the history of their past. Their research provided them with the evidence of how impregnated their spirituality and educational mission were by the spousal concept of consecration to God and the key ideas of an education of the spirit, as expressed in the Merician Writings.

With regard to the testimonies of the Brescian processes, Mother Luisa introduced a variant definitely derived from Quarré,<sup>32</sup> setting it out clearly in her deposition: Angela had been invited to stay at Venice and at Rome "to take charge of the Luoghi Pii". As a result, and still following Quarré, she highlighted Angela's charity to her neighbour that had made her known "by her visits to the Hospitals and by the lowliest of services which she rendered the infirm".

From their own experience, however, – and this was another variant in contrast to the Brescian testimonies – the Roman Ursulines had extracted statements like the following: "The aim of this Congregation is, according to her wish [Angela's], the spiritual benefit of souls and especially of young women, by instructing them in the things concerned with Christian doctrine and by guiding them on the path towards the acquisition of Christian virtues".<sup>33</sup>

But the principal concern of the Ursuline religious at Rome, with the process in mind, was to stress as much as possible the cult paid to Angela; they proved it by the directives laid down for the fast on the vigil or for some community act of devotion on her feast day; they drew attention to all the references, direct or indirect, to "Blessed" Angela, easy enough to trace in documents of official weight. After all, had not the various *Constitutions* of the Order of St Ursula, which contained these directives, been approved by a pontifical Bull? And so it was concluded that the cult of Angela, no matter how indirectly, had received the seal of the Holy See. And this appeared an irrefutable argument.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> APC. Vat. 339, f.24r. "senza però pregiudicare allo spirito primiero dell'Istituto fondato dalla Beata Angela".

<sup>32</sup> QUARRÉ, Vie, op. cit., pp.[25-26] and 456-457.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> APC. Vat. 339, f.234r. "Lo scopo di questa Congregazione volle che fosse il vantaggio spirituale dell'anime altrui, e specialmente della gioventù femminile con rendere queste istruite nelle cose risguardanti la Dottrina cristiana e bene istradate per l'acquisto delle cristiane virtù".

Thus the Constitutions of the monastery of Rome,<sup>34</sup> for example, in Ch.IX, "On Communion", listed among the days for communion the feasts of St Joseph, St Augustine, St Ursula, St Charles Borromeo, Blessed Angela; and in Ch.XVII, "On fasting", it was said: "Apart from the days laid down by the Church, they will fast every Saturday, the vigils of Our Lady, the holy Apostles, St Augustine, St Ursula, St Charles Borromeo, and Blessed Angela of Brescia". Furthermore, since the Roman monastery had obtained a Brief of approval from Innocent XI on 24 February 1688,<sup>35</sup> they considered that this gave a new approval as it were to their Constitutions, and that it also covered the exterior manifestations of cult prescribed in the Constitutions in honour of "Blessed" Angela.

The Bulls promulgated for the erection of the monasteries of Tulle (1621), of Liège (1667), of Bahia in Brazil (1753)<sup>36</sup> were copied into the Acts of the Process. This was also meant to be a proof of the Holy See's favourable attitude towards a cult which these places paid to "Blessed"

Angela at that time, "de jure" and "de facto".

At the beginning of the 18th century, a celebration had taken place at the Roman monastery which the Ursulines did not fail to cite as convincing evidence. In 1718, to mark the centenary of the foundation of the monastery of Bordeaux, to which the Roman house was linked as they had taken its Rule and Constitutions, the religious had decided to pay special homage to the one who was looked upon as the foundress of the Order of St Ursula; and the Pope himself, appearing in person at the closing of the solemn feast, had passed no unfavourable comment on the subject. And thus it was that the pages from the Chronicle<sup>37</sup> of the monastery which give a description of the commemorative pictures and statues, including two pictures and one statue of Blessed Angela, were copied into the Acts of the Process;<sup>38</sup> these pages also give the words of

35 "Ad pastoralis dignitatis fastigium", APC. Vat. 339, ff.361r-367v.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> Regola di S. Agostino e Constitutioni delle Religiose di S. Orsola dell'Instituto di Bourdeaux. Approvate e confermate dal nostro Santo Padre Papa Paolo V, alli 5 di Febraro 1618 ad instanza dell'Em.mo e Rev.mo sig. Cardinale di Sourdis Arcivescovo di Bourdeaux e Primate d'Aquitania. E doppo confermate dalla Santità di Clemente IX sotto li 12 Ottobre 1667 ad instanza di Monsig. Gaspar Nemius Arcivescovo e Duca di Cambrai, Principe del S.R. Imperio, Conte di Cambresis etc., Roma, nella Stamperia della R.C.A., 1688.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> APC. Vat. 339, respectively on ff. 347r-355v, 355v-358v, 373v-378r. We are not quoting the 1618 Bull of Paul V for the erection of the monastery of Bordeaux (APC. Vat. 339, ff.454v-464v) because we have noticed that in the Constitutions approved at that time, there is no provision yet for communion on the presumed feast day of Bl. Angela, nor for the fast on the vigil. The prescriptions for these were inscribed in the following editions which were likewise approved.

<sup>37</sup> APC.Vat. 339, ff.505r-512r.

<sup>38</sup> L'établissement des Religieuses de Ste. Ursule à Rome, l'an 1668. AGUUR, Ad.1. The account of the celebrations is to be found on pp.57-66.

various decorative texts, beginning with the one which hung over the door leading into the chapel: "Ursulinarum familia a B. Angela de Decentiano Brixiae sub annum MDXXXVII<sup>39</sup> instituta".

"The feast lasted 8 days, starting on the 5th of February ...; 8 Bishops sang the Mass pontifically, and the Vespers eight Canons from the 4 Basilicas, and finally, eight panegyrics from the most eloquent preachers". There was the sound of bells ringing even in the environs, of trumpets and tambourines, the bang of fire-crackers; streets bedecked by the inhabitants to celebrate the feast; "un arc triomphal qui portoit la figure de notre Bienheureuse H[onorée] Fondatrice, d'une part en religieuse, et de l'autre en séculière". These were very solemn external manifestations, "ce qui n'a pas peu contribué à aiguiser la curiosité de tout Rome" and to attract a crowd of "cardinaux, ambassadeurs, princes et princesses; mais ce qui a mis le comble à tous nos honneurs est celui que Sa Sainteté nous a fait d'y venir en personne avec plusieurs cardinaux et prélats, et même le Gouverneur de Rome".40

In the decorative medallions produced for the occasion figured "les portraits des 4 Souverains Pontifes qui approuvèrent cet Institut ou qui en autre manière contribuèrent à l'établissement ou amplification du même Ordre, et sous les dits portraits ces inscriptions. Sous celui de Paul III: Paulo III P. M. quod Ursulinas unum in coetum recens cunctas pontificia approbatione est complexus". The other three pontiffs represented were Paul V, Clement IX and Innocent XI; a Bull of approval of Ursuline monasteries from each one of them was reported in the APC.

The Bull promulgated by Paul III in 1544 is obviously not there.<sup>41</sup> The reason is clear: this Bull approved a Rule which by the very nature of things did not speak about fasts or exterior practices of devotion in honour of the Foundress; nor did it make any reference to her reputation for sanctity. And these were the only two things which were of importance for the beginning and the continuance of the process.

On 2 July 1759, the Roman phase of the processes came to an end; the one at Brescia had finished on 21 October 1758.

# b) In the diocese of Brescia

In Brescia the diocesan tribunal had been set up on 23 January 1758 and had been installed in the church of St Ursula. It consisted of a judge

<sup>40</sup> L'établissement, cit., pp.58; 64-65.
<sup>41</sup> Cf. supra, Pt.III, Ch.I, 2.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> For the inaccuracy of the date of foundation, cf. supra, Pt.II, Ch.VII, 3.b.

plus two assistants, a fiscal promoter (Carlo Doneda), two postulators of the cause, a notary and an usher. The process was opened on the 1st

February.

The "Instructions" already mentioned indicated what kind of documents had to be collected, especially the extra-judiciary acts issued by the ordinaries "in countries beyond the Alps as well as in Italy"; they laid down the procedures which had to be strictly adhered to, under penalty of invalidating the process; they indicated the signed manuscripts to be presented and provided the formulas for the oaths to be taken on different occasions, exploring every possible casuistic loophole in order to anticipate the solutions to them; they drew attention to the fact that the "exceptional case" was based upon the pontifical approvals of the Constitutions of the Order with their norms regarding the cult, and that it was the persistence of this cult which justified the "caso eccettuato" or "casus de excepto".

A model for drawing up minutes was proposed; it was specified that the witnesses were under oath to tell the truth when they were interrogated and to keep confidential all that was said, under penalty of incurring the excommunication reserved to the Sovereign Pontiff; fidelity was recommended in taking down the witnesses' depositions, so that there would be no distortion in either their vocabulary or their style; finally it was requested that the copied deposition should be checked by reading

it out aloud to the witness.42

The rhythm of the process was slowed down by so many procedures and formulas, repeated at the beginning and the end of each session, sometimes involving the same witness for several days.

Life, virtues, reputation for sanctity, cult of the Servant of God, all divided into 98 articles, were submitted to the examination of the witnesses, called upon to say anything they knew regarding these subjects. There was the obvious risk that the reading of these articles would predetermine stereotyped replies and repetitions in the depositions. It is interesting to note, however, that the various witnesses filter the standard material offered them through their personal knowledge, their own readings, their memories of what they had heard the voices of tradition say when they were young, either from the lips of an old mistress or an old serving-maid, also through the particular forms of devotion, public, private or communal. Their testimonies are therefore richer and carry more weight than those of the religious at Rome.

Ten witnesses were interrogated.<sup>43</sup> The documents were then exam-

<sup>42</sup> Istruzione, cit., ff.1-33 passim.

<sup>43</sup> APC, Vat. 340, ff.65r-v and 257r-258r.

ined; each one had to be presented separately, each had to carry the name of its owner or guardian *pro tempore*, together with the opinion of the handwriting expert and a detailed description.

At the request of the judges of Brescia, another enquiry had taken place in the diocese of Verona,<sup>44</sup> in particular at Desenzano, from 21 November 1757 to 8 January 1758. It was Father Francesco Andreis from Desenzano who had been specially charged with this, having been given the power of attorney by the mother general of the Company of St Ursula at Brescia, Signorina Lelia Malvezzi. In this "mini-process", there appears, among other things, the recorded account of the visit to the oratory constructed in the district of the Machet, the name of which recurs so frequently in the "rasse; and also that of the visit to the parish church and to the oratory of the Virgins of the Company.<sup>45</sup>

To all this must be added also the "mini-process" of Bordeaux and the depositions sent by the monasteries, the Companies and the groups of congregated Ursulines through their respective bishops. 46 Nearly all these testimonies deal with the cult of "Blessed" Angela.

On the other hand, to prove Angela's reputation for sanctity, in addition to the evidence already taken from the witnesses in their interrogations, some documents or extracts from them were copied into the Acts. The procedural guide-lines laid down for these transcriptions were strict and precise. Once the copy had been made, it had to be compared with the original by reading it out aloud; then there had to be a written statement to say that it agreed with the original. The documents were finally restored to their rightful owners.<sup>47</sup>

The method followed for these transcriptions guaranteed their accuracy. In the case of any errors, corrections were clearly made in the margin. In this way we can rely completely, for example, on the text of Nazari's *Vita* and of his *Iustificationi*, the original of which is lost today.

In addition to the two writings of Nazari, the manuscript *Vita* of Bellintani was copied into the Acts after a handwriting expert had authenticated the signature. Gondi's *Vita* was not copied because the printed copy was obtainable. Don Orazio Rangoni, one of the attorneys "ad docendum de fama sanctitatis, devotione populi, virtutibus et miraculis, ... nec non de cultu publico", 48 had confined himself, with reason,

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., ff.370r-425v.

<sup>45</sup> D35.

<sup>46</sup> APC, Vat. 340, ff.426r-553v.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., ff.661r-665r.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., f.23r.

to listing the books in which Angela's name was mentioned, without having them copied out. "Cum Romae facillime habere possint libri impressi historicorum variorum gentium et nationum... ideo dominus Procurator satis esse credit ad suum intentum hic indicare dumtaxat istius modi historicorum libros...".<sup>49</sup>

The process on the reputation and on the cult included also the examination of any kind of figurative expression, not only as biographical material, but also as a way of helping to verify the components of the tradition, the forms of the devotion and, of course, the respect for the norms laid down by the Decrees of Urban VIII. This is why the artexperts were expected to draw attention in particular to the existence of nimbuses, rays, haloes round Angela's head.

The iconographic examination took place in two stages, both of which were recorded in the minutes: first of all a description was made by the notary, with the aim of pointing out all the figurative details; then the opinion of the art-experts was sought; this was entrusted to two painters who examined the paintings separately and gave a separate qualitative evaluation of them, trying to identify the artist or at least to give an approximate date for each painting. As a simple contribution to the history of Merician iconography, we are giving some extracts from these evaluations in D35 and D36.

The largest pictorial output, and at the same time, the most significant, was at Brescia. The church dedicated to St Ursula had as many as 22 pictures, 16 of which were devoted to Angela Merici; the oratory of the Company possessed two others of her, of very great interest.

Some information, hitherto unpublished, about the paintings of the church is provided for us by three witnesses at the Process of beatification: the nobleman Francesco de Monte, the mother general of the Com-

pany, Lelia Malvezzi, and Don Luigi Brunello.

The first had read, in a book entitled Elemosine e spese per la chiesa di S. Orsola, that the pictures had been painted in the years 1670-1671. The second witness had said: "Concerning the time these pictures were painted and displayed in the church, I found, in a book of expenditures belonging to our Company which we have always kept in the Archives, that they were painted in 1670; and I read, on p.214 of the Terzo Libro Generale, that they were already displayed in our church on 28 December of that same year 1670, and that they had been painted and displayed at the behest of our Company and of its Superiors". Don Luigi Brunello, "figlio del quondam nobile signore Paride Brunelli", asserted in his turn:

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., f.354r.

"I read in a small book, kept in the Archives of this Company and entitled *Elemosine e spese per la chiesa di S. Orsola*, the entries of the various amounts of expenditure made in the years 1670-1671 in payment to the

painters for the said pictures".50

While the original record or archetype of the Process was deposited in the Archives of the Episcopal Curia at Brescia, its transcription, after being duly collated and checked, was entrusted to Father Francesco of Desenzano for him to take to Rome and hand over to the Sacred Congregation of Rites. This was on 2 September 1758. Father Francesco took an oath that he would carry out the mandate given to him, concluding with the traditional formula: "Sic Deus me adiuvet et haec sancta eius Evangelia".

# c) At the Congregation of Rites

A complete set of the booklets printed by the Sacred Congregation of Rites, at the expense, of course, of the Ursulines as the interested party, as was the custom, is to be found in the Bibliothèque Nationale at Paris, as we have already mentioned. It includes all the work carried out by this Dicastery during the two phases of the process, for the beatification and for the canonisation.<sup>51</sup>

The Acts which refer to the beatification process are contained in Volume H.669. This volume carries the general title of *Positio super Introductione Causae*, but it really contains two "positiones", in other words the two booklets corresponding to the two stages of the long juridical journey towards the beatification, plus another "positio" in preparation for the canonisation.

Each "positio" is generally divided into a repetitive pattern: the informational introduction, the account of the specific situation, the objections as a whole, the response to the objections. But within the general framework of this basic procedure, additional enquiries can be slotted in, and also debates, fresh objections and responses. We will try and give a short summary of the contents of each of these different sections.

<sup>51</sup> The basic title of each booklet is always the same: Brixien. Beatificationis et Canonizationis Ven. Ser-

vae Dei Angelae Mericiae Institutricis Societatis S. Ursulae BEATAE nuncupatae.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>50</sup> APC. Vat. 340, respectively f.179r; ff.208v-209r; ff.235r and 254v. "Intorno al tempo che furono fatti ed esposti in chiesa i detti quadri, raccolgo da un Libro delle spese della nostra Compagnia, che si conserva qui nel nostro Archivio, che furono dipinti nell'anno 1670, e nel *Terzo Libro Generale* della nostra Compagnia, p.214, ho letto che alli 28 decembre del suddetto anno 1670 erano già esposti i detti quadri in questa nostra chiesa, e questi furono dipinti ed esposti per ordine della nostra Compagnia e de' Superiori della medesima". "Ho letto in un libretto, che si conserva nell'Archivio di detta Compagnia e che è intitolato *Elemosine e spese per la chiesa di S. Orsola*, le diverse polizze di spese fatte nelli anni 1670 e 1671 per pagamento a pittori di detti quadri".

- Positio super Introductione Causae.

It opens with the Informatio super dubio: an sit signanda Commissio Introductionis caussae in casu et ad effectum de quo agitur? This information section of 22 pages gives, in 29 points, a biographical account of Angela Merici, based on Nazari and Bellintani, "duobus Historicis coaevis, synthesis and signal account of the coaevis account of

chronis ac supparibus maximae auctoritatis et indubiae fidei".

The 121 pages of the Summarium follow. This is a collection of the testimonies from the Brescian process on the life of Angela, with the aim of making the figure of the Servant of God more familiar. Various items of news, information and opinions are taken down almost word for word, without any critical sifting. But the commonplaces and the stereotyped testimonies can be forgiven when the witness, steeped in all the local Brescian tradition, produces the result of personal research and observations.

After this collection of testimonies had been examined, the Promoter of the Faith (better known as "devil's advocate") presented his own *Animadversiones*, criticising the absence of certain documentation to which some witnesses had referred, namely "canones quosdam, quibus se conformarent puellae instituti sui", then a will and, finally, certain letters which Angela was supposed to have written to private individuals and to princes ...

In the Responsio ad Animadversiones, consisting of 80 pages and signed by "Domenicus Claverinus advocatus", the objections raised by the Promoter of the Faith were rebutted by using against them the testimonies drawn from the diocesan processes, following all the time the guide-lines laid down on page 3 of the Animadversiones: "Praetermittimus autem verba facere de Historicis, aliisque vetustis monumentis, quae ad eius probationem in processibus afferuntur, ex his enim non constitui aptam satis, et certam probationem famae, sed solum adminiculi aliquid, ubi fama probetur per testes, diserte statuit Pontifex Benedictus XIV, lib.2, cap.40, n.1, p.3".

The work as a whole ends with a Summarium additionale (D37), which was compiled after the discussion. In it were reported the results of the most recent archives-research carried out in Brescia. In order to satisfy the preliminary objection put forward in the Animadversiones as to the doubt about the introduction of the cause, the bishop of Brescia had asked for a search to be made in the town and in the diocese to recover whatever writings there were attributed to the Servant of God, especially those of the kind mentioned in the Animadversiones. The following manuscripts were thus discovered and handed over to the Roman Dicastery:

<sup>-</sup> Regola, in a prologue and 11 chapters, as was the one which had been

presented to the notary Gian Girolamo Monti for Angela's election on 18 March 1537 and as in the Trivulzian codex;<sup>52</sup> the explicit is the same as in this last-mentioned manuscript;

- Epistola confortatoria, in 33 folios;

- Arricordi, 11 folios;

- Testamento, 13 folios;

- Dichiarazione della Bolla, 21 folios.

The last four manuscripts were copied later into the Acts of the diocesan process for Angela's canonisation, following the usual procedure of collation, checking, statement of conformity. In these texts, either one was speaking directly about Angela, or Angela, speaking about herself, had dictated some expression which concerned her directly. The Regola, on the other hand, was not copied out as there was no mention of Angela in it and Angela did not say anything in it about herself.<sup>53</sup>

The analysis of the five manuscripts handed over by the ordinary of Brescia was followed by the "Procedi posse ad ulteriora ... si SS.mo Domino Nostro placuerit. Die 12 septembris 1761". And then, finally, "Sanctitas Sua benigne annuit. Die 16 eiusdem mensis et anni 1761".

In the Summarium additionale there was also published the list of the 43 postulatory letters sent to the Holy See by sovereigns, princes, cardinals and other personages. The first letter was from the Empress Maria Theresa of Austria, the second from Louis XV. The "Merician" towns of Salò, Desenzano and above all Brescia, as was to be expected, had not failed to send theirs.

The list of the "Postulatory Letters" was followed in the Summarium by a list of the printed works in which Angela was given the title of Blessed or Saint. This list is not without interest.

Venice also made its own special contribution to the beatification cause. From a search in the State Archives at Venice,<sup>54</sup> and centred on the analysis of the repertories corresponding to the registers belonging to the series "Senato, *Deliberazioni Roma ordinaria*", some items of infor-

<sup>52</sup> Cf. D6; D1 and D3.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>53</sup> A short passage was copied, however, from the Regole della Compagnia delle vergini di S. Orsola, fatta nella magnifica città di Verona l'anno del Signore 1586. In Verona, presso Girolamo Discepolo stampatore episcopale, 1590. This passage recalled the Foundress with the words: "donna riputata di grandissimo spirito e santità". The same expression also appeared in the Regola della Compagnia delle vergini di S. Orsola, erretta in Verona l'anno 1586. Riformata dall'illustrissimo e reverendissimo monsignor Sebastiano Pisani, Vescovo di Verona, Conte, l'anno 1670. In Verona, per Giovanni Battista Merlo stampatore episcopale. (APC. Vat. 340, f.421v). The Biblioteca Comunale di Verona still has a copy of the 1594 Regola, edited by the same publisher Girolamo Discepolo, and a copy of the 1670 edition.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>54</sup> We are especially grateful for this to Dr Maria Francesca Tiepolo, director of the State Archives at Venice.

mation emerged which we are giving, together with their source. We would mention the following:

- Senato, *Deliberazioni* Roma ordinaria, reg.107, c.52r, 1758, 16 settembre: ducale from the Senate, sent to the Venetian ambassador at Rome, with the information that a petition presented by the city of Brescia on behalf of Blessed Angela Merici had been sent, so that he could see it reached the Holy Father. In the corresponding file (ibid., f.201, on the date), the petition from the city of Brescia is inserted in the original minute of the part in question, undated.
- Senato, *Dispacci degli ambasciatori*, Roma, f.279, n.75, 1758, 23 settembre: the ambassador Piero Correr gave the following reply to the Senate: "In prompt obedience to your honoured Ducale of the 16th inst., I will offer my good services, in an expeditious way and personally, to prevail upon His Holiness to allow the cause of Blessed Angela Merici of Desenzano to go forward, as the city of Brescia has evinced so much interest in it".<sup>54b</sup>
- Senato, Dispacci degli ambasciatori, Roma, f.285, n.253, 1765, 7 dicembre: the ambassador Gerolamo Ascanio Giustinian sent a memoir to the Senate (inserted in the dispatch itself) which had been presented to him to "obtain the commission to recommend officially to the Holy Father the cause of Blessed Angela Merici of Brescia, in which other Sovereigns have also taken an interest, as is usually done to add more solemnity to the dispatch and to speed it up".(id)
- Senato, *Deliberazioni Roma ordinaria*, reg.109, c.186, 1765, 14 dicembre: the Senate communicated having received the above-mentioned memoir for "the cause of Blessed Angela Merici and, seeing the interest of other sovereigns in it, the Senate wishes to add its own recommendation of it to the Holy Father".(id)

The Decree for the introduction of the cause of the "Ven. Servae Dei Angelae Mericiae fundatricis Societatis S. Ursulae beatae nuncupatae" was issued on 13 August 1763. This Decree can be found in the Summa-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>54b</sup> "In pronta obbedienza alla riverita Ducale 16 corrente, interporrò, come da me, li più pressanti uffizzi, perché Sua Santità permetta che sia introdotta la causa della Beata Angela Merici da Desenzano, per la quale è tanto interessata la città di Brescia".

<sup>&</sup>quot;... ottenere la commissione di raccomandare al Santo Padre in nome pubblico, la causa della Beata Angela Merici da Brescia, nella quale si sono interessati anche altri Sovrani, come è solito per rendere più solenne e più sollecita la spedizione".

<sup>&</sup>quot;... memoriale per la causa della Beata Angela Merici, per la quale essendo interessati altri sovrani, si concorre pure dal Senato alla richiesta raccomandazione al Santo Padre".

rium of the "Positio [III] super dubio an constet de Validitate Processus Apostolici constructi Brixiae super Virtutibus et Miraculis in specie. 1776", which belongs to the process of canonisation. The first stage of the long procedural journey had been accomplished. Its sole aim had been to verify that there were good grounds for the introduction of the cause.

At this point the Ursulines of the Roman monastery presented a Supplex Libellus<sup>55</sup> to Clement XIII, confirming the uninterrupted cult of which Angela Merici had been the object, so that the process "casus excepti" could be brought into effect. The rescript of 19 August 1767, which had opened the path to this procedure, is quoted in the Decree of 30 April 1768: "Die 19 Augusti anni 1767. Ex Audientia Sanctissimi. Sanctissimus benigne remisit preces ad Sacram Rituum congregationem, cum omnibus et quibuscumque facultatibus necessariis et opportunis iuxta petita. Vigore huius Rescripti ad Sac. Rituum Congregationem delata res est, propositoque dubio: An sententia lata a DD. Judicibus delegatis... sit confirmanda?". 56

Now the way was open to proceed to the second stage.

- Positio super dubio: an sententia lata a DD. Judicibus delegatis ab E.mo et R.mo Ordinario Brixien, super cultu publico in vim Pontificiorum Indultorum praedictae Beatae exhibito sit confirmanda; sive an constet de casu excepto a Decretis Sa. Me. Urbani P.P. VIII in casu, et ad effectum de quo agitur? Romae, 1768.

The *Informatio*, consisting of 20 pages, contained an account of the Brescian process and summarised what had happened there.

Then the *Summarium* tackled directly the whole question of the public cult of Angela Merici, the result being an alternative: either to set up a process "de casu excepto", or to let the cause drop.

The lines of argument used the same material as that provided at the diocesan process at Brescia (to which must be added the testimonies taken at the "mini-processes" of Verona and Bordeaux, as well as attestations from everywhere) and at the diocesan Commission which had carried out its work in the monastery at Rome. None of the testimonies

<sup>55</sup> [Supplex libellus], manuscript bound in leather, measuring 27.5 x 20cm, annotated, consisting of 106 pages in beautiful handwriting. AGUUR, B.9.

<sup>56</sup> AGUUR, B10. This Decree and others which followed are all published in the [anonymous] Histoire de l'Ordre de Sainte Ursule, depuis sa fondation jusqu'à nos jours, divisée en quatre parties, Paris, chez Nyon Libraire, rue du Jardinet, et Orléans chez C.A.I. Jacob Aîné, Imprimeur-Libraire, rue St. Sauveur, 1787; tome second, IV partie, liv.VI, pp.529-538; and in SALVATORI, Vita della Santa Madre, op. cit., pp.232-240, and in the English edition translated by Sr Marie de Mercurio, already mentioned, on pp.215-225.

contained in the APC. Vat. 339 and 340 had been overlooked. The quotation references were always given in the margin. Altogether this filled 150 pages.

Then the Promoter of the Faith intervened with his Animadversiones regarding the title of "Blessed" or "Saint" given to Angela in the docu-

mentation quoted earlier.

The Responsio ad Animadversiones, in 33 pages, drew attention to the various pontifical documents about the cult, in support of the written, oral and iconographic testimonies of veneration collected in the two above-mentioned volumes of APC.

As a result of all this information which he received directly, Clement XIII declared, in the same Decree of 30 April 1768, that Angela Merici deserved the title of "Blessed", and so confirmed her cult:

"Facta deinde per E.mum et R.mum D. cardinalem Ludovicum Calini, caussae ponentem, Sanctissimo Domino Nostro relatione, Sanctitas Sua, semel et bis ad se accersito praefato R.P.D. Carolo Alexio Pisani Sub Fidei Promotore, quum in facto agnoverit, tanta cum Sanctitatis fama decessisse Beatam Angelam, ut statim post obitum Beatorum honores Brixiae ei fuerint delati, ac plurimis postea in locis, in quibus Ursulinarum monasteria fuere extructa, scientibus, et non reluctantibus locorum Ordinariis, per decursum fere centum annorum ante Urbani Decreta, quamplura, eaque satis speciosa, cultus signa eidem adhibita, et innumeri fere non infimae auctoritatis scriptores eiusdem virtutum magno commendationum praeconio meminerint: Consideratis, seduloque perpensis documentis illis, quibus Apostolica Indulta, sive tacita sive expressa non deesse, comprobare nitebantur Postulatores; nec non Indulgentiis illis, quas eadem Sanctitas Sua concessit tam a monialibus Ursulinis, quam a puellis earumdem scholas frequentantibus, perpetuo lucrandas die 21 Martii eiusdem Beatae Angelae natalitio, quasque ratas habuit, et quatenus opus esset, confirmavit: Hinc ex omnibus simul iunctis declaravit, Casum, de quo agitur, ob peculiares facti circumstantias posse non comprehendi sub censura Decretorum sanctae memoriae Urbani VIII, ac proinde cultum, quo hactenus potita est Ancilla Dei, solemni hocce Decreto confirmavit. Die 30 Aprilis eiusdem anni 1768".

This Decree, or "beatificazione equipollente", replaced the solemn ceremony of beatification without, however, diminishing in any way the glory of this proclamation. It was a way "all the quicker as it was less expensive".<sup>57</sup>

<sup>57 [</sup>Supplex libellus], cit., p.1.

#### Other Decrees followed;58

- della S.C. dei Riti, 21 maggio 1768: permission for a solemn celebration to be held in the churches of the Ursulines, on the following 10 July, "cum moniales Societatis S. Ursulae festum Beatae Angelae Merici a Decentiano, vulgo dictae a Brixia, Fundatricis eiusdem Societatis solemniori prae caeteris antecedentibus annis pompa, et apparatu celebrare summopere desiderent";
- della S.C. delle Indulgenze, 31 maggio 1768: concession of a plenary indulgence for anyone who, after confession and communion, prayed for the intentions of the Sovereign Pontiff in one of the Ursuline churches, that 10 July: "Ad humillimas preces Monialium S. Ursulae Sanctissimus Dominus Noster Clemens PP. XIII benigne inclinatus universis utriusque sexus Christifidelibus, qui vere poenitentes confessi, ac sacra communione refecti aliquam praedictarum Monialium ecclesiam ubicumque locorum existentem die decima Julii currentis anni devote visitaverint, ibique per aliquod temporis spatium iuxta mentem Sanctitatis Suae pias ad Deum preces effuderint Indulgentiam plenariam pro hoc anno tantum lucrandam benigne concessit";
- della S.C. dei Riti, 25 giugno 1768: allowing the transfer of the abovementioned celebration to another date of the same year, so as to give adequate time for the preparation of this solemn feast: "Cum vero eaedem Moniales praedictae Societatis in Italia et extra existentes ad apparatum, aliaque necessaria pro eodem festo praedicta die celebrando comparanda non esse paratas exposuerint eidem Sanctissimo Domino Nostro pro assignatione alterius diei a respectivis locorum Ordinariis designandi humillime supplicarunt; et Sanctitas Sua, referente me infrascripto Secretario, pro gratia iuxta petita, dummodo festum praedictum infra terminum currentis anni celebretur Oratricibus benigne annuit";
- della S.C. delle Indulgenze, 21 giugno 1768: concession of the plenary indulgence on the day to which the above-mentioned feast was transferred: 59 "Sanctissimus Dominus Noster Clemens PP. XIII Indulgentiam plenariam ad humillimas preces Monialium Sanctae Ursulae benigne concessam universis utriusque sexus Christifidelibus, qui vere poenitentes confessi, ac sacra communione refecti, aliquam praedictarum Monialium ecclesiam ubicumque locorum existentem die decima Julii currentis anni devote visitaverint, ibique per aliquod temporis spatium iuxta mentem

<sup>58</sup> AGUUR, B10.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>59</sup> There is an apparent inconsistency between the dates of these last two decrees; this arises simply from the fact that they came from two different dicasteries.

Sanctitatis Suae pias ad Deum preces effuderint, clementer extendit extra Urbem et exteras Regiones ad illam diem a respectivis locorum Ordinariis infra tamen currentis anni spatium designandam";

- della S.C. dei Riti, 22 dicembre 1768: permission to celebrate the Mass and Office with double major rite in the diocese of Brescia, in the monasteries of the Order and in the houses of the Company of St Ursula, and permission to transfer the feast of Blessed Angela from the 21 March, the presumed date of her death, 60 to 31 March:

"Sanctissimus Dominus noster Clemens PP. XIII, enixis demissisque precibus E.mi et R.mi D. cardinalis Molini episcopi Brixien., nec non universae Societatis S. Ursulae, audito prius voce R.P. Carolo Alexio Pisani Fidei Promotore, ad relationem per me infrascriptum Secretarium factam, benigne inclinatus concessit, ut tam a Clero seculari et regulari Civitatis et Dioecesis Brixien., quam a Monialibus monasteriorum, seu collegiorum dictae Societatis S. Ursulae ubique degentibus Officium de Communi Virginum sub ritu duplicis maioris in festo B. Angelae Mericiae a Decentiano vulgo dictae a Brixia eiusdem Societatis Fundatricis, cujus cultum jam sub die 30 Aprilis labentis anni 1768 ex vi Pontificiorum Indultorum ab eadem Sanctitate Sua adprobatum fuerat, imposterum possit recitari; missaque itidem de eodem Communi tum in praefatis Civitate et Dioecesi, tum in ecclesiis Monialium, in quibus idem profitetur Institutum, celebrari. Insuperque indulsit, ut festum praedictum a die vigesima prima mensis Martii ejusdem Beatae emortuali, ut plurimum ab hebdomada majori, vel Paschatis impedita, ad diem trigesimam primam mensis Maii quotannis, servatis tamen Breviarii, ac Missalis Romani rubricis, in perpetuum possit transferri";

- della S.C. delle Indulgenze, 10 gennaio 1769: concession of a plenary indulgence in perpetuity to anyone who, after confession and communion, visited an Ursuline church on 31 May, and prayed there for the intentions of the Sovereign Pontiff:

"Ad humillimas preces Monialium Ursulinarum Sanctissimus Dominus noster Clemens PP. XIII benigne inclinatus, universis utriusque sexus Christifidelibus, qui vere poenitentes confessi, sacraque Communione refecti aliquam ex ecclesiis monasteriorum seu collegiorum Monialium Ursulinarum ubicumque locorum existentibus hactenus erectis, et in posterum erigendis, devote visitaverint die trigesima prima Maii, ibique per aliquod temporis spatium iuxta mentem Sanctitatis Suae pias ad Deum preces effuderint Indulgentiam plenariam incipiendam a primis Vesperis usque ad occasum solis praedicti diei benigne concessit, cum revocatione

<sup>60</sup> Cf. supra, Pt.II, Ch.VI, 3.b.

alterius Decreti Indulgentiae obtenti pro die vigesima prima Martii. Voluitque Sanctitas Sua hanc gratiam perpetuis futuris temporibus absque ulla Brevis expeditione fore valituram".

#### 3. THE PROCESS OF CANONISATION

Nearly forty years separate the solemn celebrations in honour of "Blessed" Angela, held especially in Europe but also in other parts of the world, from the solemn ceremony which took place in St Peter's for her canonisation on 24 May 1807. All the official procedures had already been completed in 1790, but the political events which convulsed Europe delayed the crowning of this work in the Vatican basilica.

Once again the praxis envisaged two phases. The whole of the first one, which took place in the diocese of Brescia (and partly in that of Verona), is recorded in the APC. Vat. 341-344, while the second stage, at the Sacred Congregation of Rites, is documented by the printed booklets

of the various "positiones".

# a) In the diocese of Brescia

The apostolic process for the canonisation of Angela Merici opened at Brescia on 3 April 1770, during the pontificate of Clement XIV.

In 1766 Mother Luisa Schiantarelli had been elected postulatrix of the cause: "Les Supérieurs qui présidoient au Chapitre des Ursulines au nom du Cardinal-Vicaire, approuvèrent un choix d'autant plus judicieux, que cette Religieuse, d'ailleurs fort intelligente, étoit plus au fait que personne de l'affaire présente; et on en dressa aussitôt un acte dans toutes les formes. La mère Louise de Saint Joseph pouvoit donc désormais suivre tous les mouvemens de son zèle pour la gloire de la Mère commune de l'Ordre. Bientôt elle s'annonça comme postulatrice de sa cause aux différentes maisons de l'Institut. Elle envoya de toutes parts des Lettres circulaires; et c'est alors que le public dut être plus que jamais convaincu de l'unité du corps entre toutes les Ursulines, par leur empressement presque universel à contribuer aux frais indispensables de cette procédure".61

By act of proxy dated 31 March 1770, Mother Luisa delegated Don

Francesco Montanini to represent her at the process at Brescia.62

 <sup>[</sup>Anonymous], Histoire de l'Ordre, op. cit., tome second, quatrième partie, liv.VI, p.526.
 For the opening of the diocesan process and the setting up of the competent tribunal, cf. APC.
 Vat. 341, ff.1r-3v; for the oaths required by the official procedure, ff.4r-11v and 61r-81v; for the

The articles for the interrogation, numbering 107, had been compiled this time by the Roman lawyer Giuseppe Maria Salvatori, "specialiter constitutus ad docendum de fama sanctitatis, puritate fidei, sanctitate vitae, excellentia et heroicitate virtutum eiusdem Beatae Angelae Mericiae, ac etiam de miraculis, quae illius meritis et intercessione Deus operari dignatus est et in dies operatur".<sup>63</sup>

But during the work-sessions of the Sacred Congregation of Rites a synthesis had been made of all the various testimonies, the "contaminatio", consisting of a mixture of the Brescian testimonies from the first phase, and those of the Roman witnesses. The "articles" for the second process bore the imprint of this, and inevitably the witnesses in their turn would be influenced by it.

A specific biographical detail will make this clear: in articles 13 and 14, the lawyer Salvatori had written that at Venice as well as in Rome, the Blessed had been invited to remain in these cities to take over the "government of the luoghi pii". This was a statement which the Ursulines at Rome had extracted from their reading of Quarré's Vita 64 and from the image of Angela which he had conjured up for himself from the Vita of Gondi. The sisters had repeated this phrase again and again when they were being questioned by the diocesan Commission. It had been seized upon and incorporated in the articles drawn up in preparation for the Brescian interrogation, and it now reappeared, with a certain monotony, in the second process, and always as a biographical fact. But no-one, beginning with the lawyer who was making use of the phrase, no-one connected it with any action which Blessed Angela was supposed to have carried out in connection with the "luoghi pii", or among the sick and infirm.

Only Don Giacomo Brachetti,65 professor of rhetoric, speaking about charity to one's neighbour, felt obliged to base the so-called invitation on the presupposition that Angela must have frequently visited the sick in the hospitals. But this invitation, as we have seen, had been couched in terms very different from those used by Quarré; the French author had amplified the original statement with an apologetic aim in mind.66

<sup>&</sup>quot;remissorial letter" of the Sacred Congregation of Rites where a summary is given of the ground already covered for the cause of beatification and where authorisation is given for the process of canonisation to be opened, ff.11v-22v; for the "compulsorial letter" of the same Sacred Congregation for the identification of the mortal remains and the procedure to be adopted, ff.58r-60v.

<sup>63</sup> For the 107 articles, ibid., ff.23r-57v.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. supra, Pt.I, Ch.II, 1.e.

<sup>APC. Vat. 341, ff.127r-213v; especially f.164r.
Cf. supra, Pt.II, Ch.V, 3. and the Appendix Note.</sup> 

Thirteen other witnesses were interrogated. None of them, when replying about Angela's charity towards her neighbour, not one of them mentioned the sick, the infirm, the hospitals; at Brescia, moreover, neither the iconography, the historiography, nor the tradition had ever spoken about them, no matter what Father Quarré had written about them in France.

Profiting by the experience gained at the beatification process, this time the diocesan tribunal did not wait for the challenge of the *Animadversiones* (as had happened in the first procedural phase) to find and to produce every available document. Thus there were copied out, among other things, Bellintani's manuscript *Vita* in 31 chapters, the act of Angela's election from the authentic parchment original, <sup>67</sup> the two writings of Nazari, the *Ricordi* and the *Testamento* of Blessed Angela, together with the *Epistola confortatoria* and the *Dichiarazione della Bolla* of Cozzano.

The Regola in 12 chapters, frequently mentioned, was not copied out however. There is a good reason for this. The fact that the witnesses referred to the Regola "in twelve chapters", (and not in a prologue and eleven chapters, as it was in the manuscript original), 68 suggests that, out of the two texts, they only knew Turlino's printed edition, and this was the one they had to hand. Besides not containing any direct testimony about Angela's virtue, it was a printed document and as such, according to the procedure, it did not have to be written down in the acts.

As for the letters which Angela was supposed to have written, re-

quested by the Animadversiones, not one of them was found.

The above-mentioned manuscripts were submitted to expert opinion on handwriting, then copied out and collated according to rigid guide-lines by the two notaries of the diocesan tribunal.

In the course of the process, in 1774 to be precise, the juridical recognition of Angela's mortal remains took place; it was the last act in Brescia of the apostolic process on the virtues of Blessed Angela, and there was no lack of tensions and polemics.

A "compulsorial letter" of the Promoter of the Faith, Mgr Carlo Alessio Pisani, dated 30 August 1769,69 had indicated the procedure to be followed. A second document, however, undated but by the same author and entitled "Private Instructions", gave rise to opposing points of

<sup>67</sup> D6.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>68</sup> The witnesses certainly had at hand also the *Regola* revised and reformed by Charles Borromeo, either in the 1582 edition or in one of the later ones, since they referred to Chapters 13-26 which are not to be found in the Turlino edition. This *Regola* was not transcribed either into the APC. <sup>69</sup> Cf. supra, note 62.

view regarding the new habit in which Angela's remains were to be clothed. Accepting the desire expressed by Ursuline religious throughout the world, Mgr Pisani allowed the black habit of the cloistered nuns to be chosen.

We have already spoken about this regrettable debate with regard to Angela's burial and to the private ceremony of 30 August 1774 when the body was re-clothed. Ten days earlier the official medical recognition of Angela's mortal remains had been carried out and a description of them written down in full in the minutes. It was noted, among other things, that the head still had "nearly all its fair hair" and that the right eye was still intact under the eyelid. We do not know the source of Father Filippo Maria Salvatori's information about "a leaden ring on her finger, engraved inside with the words 'Iesus Christus'", as there is no mention of it in the APC which do not fail, however, to draw attention to the remnants of a wreath of artificial flowers tied together with thin wire and to those of a laurel bough. The ring probably belongs to a pious "hearsay" fed by the imagination.

On 13 February 1775, the complete transcription of the process on the virtues was completed, as well as its collation with the original documents, and with this the tribunal was closed. The envelope with the Acts duly sealed was entrusted to the priest Don Giovanni Battista Mingotti, after he had taken the oath to carry out faithfully the mandate received to take it to Rome and to hand it over to the competent Dicastery of the Roman Curia.<sup>73</sup>

In conformity with the pontifical Rescript of 1st July 1776,<sup>74</sup> the solemn translation of Angela's remains was carried out on 4 April 1777; they were transferred from the crypt of St Afra to the church above. An account of it was then sent to Mother Luisa:<sup>75</sup> the bones had had any mould removed from them and then had been re-dressed in new clothes; on 12 April, the body had been placed "in the new magnificent tomb", in the presence of a great crowd of "blind, crippled, disabled persons, as you requested from me at the beginning".

The postulatrix had expressly requested this crowd of sick people in the hope that one of them would be cured, thereby hastening the end of the process.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. supra, Pt.II, Ch.VI, 3.c.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>71</sup> APC. Vat. 341, ff.999r-1016v. Cf. supra, Pt.II, Ch.VI, 3.c.

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>72</sup> SALVATORI, Vita, op. cit., p.139.
 <sup>73</sup> APC. Vat. 341, ff.1038v-1041r.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>74</sup> SALVATORI, Vita, op. cit., p.140.

<sup>75 &</sup>quot;Ragguaglio della traslazione del corpo della B. Angela Merici da Brescia", a manuscript folio dated "Brescia, li 17 aprile 1777", AGUUR, Be.1.

The miracle actually happened three days later, on 15 April: Angela Filippini, wife of the Brescian notary Pietro Ravelli, seriously ill from a number of infected cancerous sores, was suddenly cured. The process about this miraculous cure was opened the following year, on 10 June 1778. The procedure, extremely complicated, included the interrogation of the person cured, the witnesses and the doctors. This process ended on 17 March 1781.<sup>76</sup>

Still at Brescia, a jury was constituted on 23 April of the same year to examine another cure: Maria d'Acquafredda, a victim of apoplexy, had suddenly been healed on 31 May 1779. This process closed on 3 July 1781, and the envelope was sealed on 18 February 1782 for dispatch to Rome.<sup>77</sup>

On 13 October 1780, a process had opened at Verona for the sudden cure of Suor Maria Angela Comini, religious of the monastery of St John the Evangelist of the Beverara in the same city. Suffering from hemiplegia and from other serious illnesses, she had been healed on 16 July 1778. The process finished on 13 September 1782, but the Ambassador at Venice did not take the Acts to the Sacred Congregation of Rites until 3 July 1783.

The dispensation from the fourth miracle having been obtained by Mother Luisa later, these last three processes brought to an end all the work of investigation outside Rome. From this time onwards, everything would take place within the confines of the Roman Curia.

# b) At the Roman Curia

The first phase of the process at the Roman Curia with a view to the canonisation of Blessed Angela was concerned with the validity of the Brescian process; it is documented in the "positio" which closes Vol. H.669 of the Bibliothèque Nationale at Paris. In Vol.H.670 there is the "positio" on the heroicity of the virtues of the Blessed. These two "positiones" are the ones which Lombardi calls III and IV. All the rest of the work carried out by the Roman Curia, concerning the miracles, is contained in Volumes H.671, H.672, H.673.

We are now going to look at these two important "positiones":

- Positio super dubio: an constet de Validitate Processus Apostolici constructi

APC. Vat. 342.
 APC, Vat. 343.

Brixiae super Virtutibus et Miraculis in specie? 1776.

This "positio" consists of the four customary sections, namely the Informatio, the Summarium, the Animadversiones of the Promoter of the Faith and the Responsio ad Animadversiones on the part of the interested party or advocate; there is also an appendix. This first stage of the canonisation process at the Sacred Congregation of Rites was based on the documentation handed over by the ecclesiastical Tribunal at Brescia.

The Informatio, as usual, summarises the procedures for sending out the "remissorial" and "compulsorial" letters, as well as what had happened at the sessions of the Brescian tribunal on the virtues practised by

Blessed Angela Merici.

The Summarium collects together, in 20 pages, the text of certain Curial documents, the oath-formulas (for the delegate-judges, the witnesses, etc.,), the information about the penalties the notaries, archivists and other officials would incur if they tried to dissuade anyone from telling the truth, the minutes of the inspection of the tomb and of the reclothing of the body.

Two pages suffice for the presentation of the Animadversiones, to which the five pages of the Responsio reply, defending the proceedings

followed at Brescia in the course of the process.

A Summarium additionale contains Mother Luisa's petition for a simplification of the procedure of this phase. The favour was granted on 22 July 1776.

The way was now clear to pass on to the "positio" on the heroicity of the virtues, the one which Lombardi quotes most frequently in his

Vita.

– Positio super dubio: an constet de Virtutibus Theologalibus Fide, Spe et Charitate erga Deum et proximum; necnon de Cardinalibus Prudentia, Justitia, Fortitudine et Temperantia, earumque adnexis in gradu heroico, in casu et ad effec-

tum de quo agitur? Romae 1777.

The first booklet, with 56 pages, is the *Informatio*. It contains the biographical information drawn from the material furnished by the depositions. Then comes the synthesis of the testimonies on the heroicity of the virtues, in the same order as they had been dealt with during the interrogations: first of all the three theological virtues, charity being examined under the twofold aspect of charity towards God and towards the neighbour; then the four cardinal virtues. A second synthesis goes back over the depositions about the manifestations of any supernatural gifts and about the reputation for sanctity which Angela enjoyed during her lifetime and after her death.

The Summarium, in 391 pages, gives extracts, with a few variants,

from Nassino, Landini, Nazari, Bellintani and Tribesco, as well as Bishop Ferretti's statement in the "Confirmatio" of the Regola: "cognoscentes devotionem S. quondam Mulieris", with the abbreviation "S." being interpreted as "Sanctae".

The traditional biographical elements are then considered in relation to the different virtues, but these are opposed by the Promoter of the Faith in eight pages of *Animadversiones*, and then these in turn are refuted by the sixteen pages of the *Responsio*. This booklet is the last one of the set H.670 in the Bibliothèque Nationale of Paris.

At the conclusion of this Position the Decree of 16 July 1777 was issued, granting the permission to move to the discussion of the four

miracles required by the procedure:

"Proposito in Sacra Rituum Congregatione ordinaria absque interventu Consultorum praevia dispensatione Apostolica, ad instantiam Sororis Mariae Aloysiae a Sancto Josepho assistentis monasterii Ursulinarum Urbis Postulatricis, per Em.mum et Rev.mum D.num Cardinalem Calino relatorem caussae Beatae Angelae Merici fundatricis Societatis S. Ursulae, atque in eadem sub infrascripta die discusso Dubio: An constet de Virtutibus theologalibus Fide, Spe et Charitate erga Deum et Proximum, necnon de cardinalibus Prudentia, Justitia, Fortitudine, et Temperantia, earumque adnexis in gradu heroico, in casu et ad effectum de quo agitur? Em.mi Patres dictae Sac. Congregationi praepositi, mature expensis atque examinatis cunctis in eadem caussa deductis, auditoque prius R.P.D. Dominico de Sancto Petro Fidei Promotore, qui sententiam suam scripto et voce exposuit, unanimi consensu rescripserunt: Ita constare, ut deveniri possit ad discussionem quatuor Miraculorum, si Sanctissimo Domino Nostro placuerit; die 12 Julii 1777.

"Et facta deinde per me infrascriptum Secretarium de praedictis eidem Sanctissimo Domino Nostro relatione, Sanctitas Sua benigne an-

nuit, die 16 ejusdem mensis, et anni 1777".78

The last phase of the canonisation process thus opened; it was concerned with the validity and the veracity of the miracles attributed to the intercession of Blessed Angela and was based on the depositions of those who had been witnesses to the miraculous cures.

From the acts of the processes held at Brescia and at Verona (where the cures had taken place) the following first position was drawn:

- Positio super dubio: an constet de validitate Processuum Brixiae et Veronae

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>78</sup> AGUUR, B.10. Later, on 23 May 1778, a Decree approved the Lessons of the Second Nocturn of Matins and the Prayers of the Proper of the Mass of Blessed Angela.

auctoritate Apostolica constructorum super Miraculis in specie? Romae 1784.

As usual this "positio" comprises an *Informatio*, a *Summarium* ("De processu Brixiae anni 1778 usque ad annum 1781", "De altero processu Brixiae annorum 1781 et 1782", "De processu Veronae annorum 1781 et 1783"), with the various Decrees, the different tables summarising the names of the witnesses and the respective dates of the procedural acts concerning them: "Inductio, citatio, juramentum, examen".

Three pages of Animadversiones, nine of the Responsio ad animadversiones, nine of a Summarium additionale complete the volume. A handwritten note at the top of the first booklet says: "Super miraculis die 4 De-

cembris 1784. Affirmative. J. card. Archintus ponens".

And so with this recognition of the validity of the apostolic processes, the final stage of the clinical examination of the miracles could be started. The following position was therefore prepared:

- Positio super miraculis. Super dubio: an de quibus Miraculis constet in casu et ad effectum de quo agitur? 1787.

The *Informatio* sets out, in 40 pages, the events which accompanied the sudden and clinically impossible cures of the persons miraculously healed – Angela Filippini, Maria d'Acquafredda and Suor Maria Angela Comini.

The Summarium presents the testimonies of the doctors and of the other witnesses consulted. The Animadversiones opposes them by 24 pages of discussion, which in turn are countered by the 115 pages of the Responsio ad Animadversiones.

Two booklets follow, with 40 and 11 pages respectively, and are entitled: Lucae Boccarelli, philosophiae et medicinae doctoris, Judicium physico-medicum super miraculis I et II quae proponuntur<sup>79</sup> in causa Brixien. Canonizationis B. Angelae Merici fundatricis Societatis S. Ursulae and Francisci Petragliae, professoris medicinae, Judicium super miraculo quod tertio loco ad discutendum proponitur<sup>80</sup> in causa Brixien. Canonizationis B. Angelae Merici parentis Societatis S. Ursulae.

This "positio super miraculis" is also to be found at Paris, catalogued as H.672. Intended for the Consultors of the Sacred Congregation, who had to examine the three miracles under consideration before giving their opinion, it collects together all the available material on the subject.

Giving the opinions of the Consultors after having once again ex-

80 This concerns the miracle obtained on behalf of Suor Maria Angela Comini of Verona.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>79</sup> These are the miracles which occurred at Brescia, on behalf of Angela Filippini and of Maria d'Acquafredda.

plained all the background of the situation, the Advocate of the Cause presented the

- Nova Positio super miraculis. Romae 1789, which had to be discussed before the Cardinals. Basing himself on the opinions expressed by the Consultors, the Promoter of the Faith drew up his Animadversiones which, as was customary, were refuted by the Responsio and by the booklet entitled Francisci Mora, Urbis totiusque Status Ecclesiastici Protomedici generalis in Apostolico S. Spiritus Archinosocomio, Institutionum chirurgicarum Lectoris et Medici primarii, Judicium pro veritate super miraculis quae proponuntur in causa Brixiensi Canonizationis Beatae Angelae Merici fundatricis Societatis Sanctae Ursulae.

The stage was thus reached of the

- Novissima Positio super miraculis. Romae, 1789, which collected together the opinions of the Cardinals and was intended for discussion before the Pope.

The Novissimae Animadversiones of the Promoter of the Faith were rebutted by the Advocate in the twenty-two pages of the Responsio, followed in turn by another ten pages of the section by the abovementioned Doctor Francesco Mora, Responsum pro veritate super Miraculo

III, super miraculo II, then super miraculo III again.

Before proceeding to the conclusion of the process with a Decree of canonisation, the praxis demanded at this point the examination of a fourth miracle. But the Postulatrix requested exemption from this fourth examination in order not to delay any further the final stage of a cause which had been protracted for so many years.

Hence the compilation of another

- Positio super dubio: an stante adprobatione Virtutum et trium Miraculorum tuto deveniri possit ad solemnem eiusdem Beatae Canonizationem? Romae 1790. This consisted of a Supplex libellus of four pages, a Summarium of seven, and two pages of Adnotationes R.P. Fidei Promotoris.

A special Congregation was then convened by Pope Pius VI, and a last position prepared, and with this the Roman series of process work

would come to an end. This was the

– Positio super dubio: an sit consulendum Sanctissimo pro dispensatione a quarto miraculo in casu et ad effectum de quo agitur? Romae 1790.

A Supplex libellus presented to the Holy Father Mother Luisa's request for a dispensation from the fourth miracle.

Five pages of the Animadversiones R.P. D. Fidei Promotoris opposed

this, and in support of these a Summarium additionale was added, together with the Decree of Benedict XIV for the canonisation of the Ven. Servant of God Paolo Burali, in which it was reaffirmed that four proven miracles were necessary before proceeding to the canonisation of a candidate.

The impassioned defence of the lawyers Giuseppe Maria Salvatori and Tomaso Maria Salvatori filled the eight pages of the Responsio ad Animadversiones. And, in support of the undeniable sanctity of the Blessed, clearly affirmed in all the interrogations, another Summarium was included, containing the Processo Nazari which for the occasion was entitled Processus sive publicum Instrumentum super juridico examine Testium infrascriptorum de visu. The deposition taken from the four eye-witnesses was declared irrefutable, and even the Promoter of the Faith, "the devil's advocate", dared not raise any further objections.

Pius VI carried the news personally to the monastery of Via Vittoria on 27 January 1790, the day universally recognised by then as Angela Merici's "dies natalis". Having celebrated the eucharistic sacrifice in the convent chapel (which was dedicated to St Joseph), the Pope entered the enclosure and in the presence of the highest dignitaries of the Sacred Congregation of Rites he proclaimed the validity of the miracles examined. We give the last part of the relevant Decree:

"Hodiernum vero diem B. Angelae emortualem praeterire noluit, quin exoptatum ferret *Decretum*, ea mente, ut ab ea institutae Societatis Alumnae, certa prodigiorum coelestium notitia excitatae, pretiosam in conspectu Domini mortem ejus majori pietate, et gaudio recolerent. In earum itaque Templum Deo in honorem S. Josephi dicatum se contulit, Divinamque Aeterno Patri Victimam summa religione immolavit: deinde claustrales aedes ingressus, adstantibus Reverendissimo Cardinali Archinto S.R.C. Praefecto, eodemque causae Relatore, R.P. Carolo Erskine Sub Fidei Promotore, meque infrascripto Secretario, rite pronuntiavit: *Constare de tribus Miraculis a Deo, B. Angela Mericia intercedente, patratis, ad tertium genus referendis*. Decretumque ad vulgi notitiam prius deductum, in acta S. Congregationis referri jussit. 6 Cal. Februar. anni 1790".81

The dispensation from the fourth miracle, requested by Mother Luisa, was granted the following 21 April. On 15 August, the feast of the Assumption, the *Decree of Canonisation*, commonly called "de tuto", was promulgated.

<sup>81</sup> SALVATORI, Vita, op. cit., pp.237-239.

Projecting backward the educational mission which more than anything else characterised the Ursuline religious from their earliest days, and unwittingly superimposing in an uncritical way the stereotype of the teacher on the historical figure of Angela Merici, this Decree presented the future saint as a woman who had dedicated a great part of her life to the education of young girls. This was an image completely unknown to the witnesses of the processes at Brescia, unknown also to the oldest local tradition; it really owed its origin to the "contaminatio" between the biographical information from Brescian sources and the testimonies collected in the monastery of Via Vittoria, which had taken place within the Roman Curia itself.

The Decree "de tuto" was drawn up in these terms:

"Puerilis aetas inops consilii, et infirma, quam Christus Dominus singulari caritate complexus omni cura suscipiendam docuerat, magnum nacta est praesidium columenque in Beata Angela Mericia; quae, cum praecipuum suae vitae tempus puellarum moribus conformandis devovit, tum praeclaram Ursulinarum Societatem in idem munus impigre incumbentem, summo Religionis Reique publicae bono fundavit. Merito igitur digna prudens haec Virgo visa est, quae ab Ecclesia universa lau-

dem venerationemque adipisceretur.

"Et vero, postquam delatos ei jam plerisque in regionibus Beatorum honores Clemens XIII. Pont. Max. legitimos declaraverat; deinde vero, de virtutibus ejus heroicis feliciter absoluto judicio, de miraculis etiam tributam ei venerationem consecutis constiterat; novissime in Generali Sac. Rit. Congregatione coram Sanctissimo Domino Nostro Pio Papa Sexto habita III Idus Jul. in Palatio Apostolico Quirinali, de ipsius cultu per universam Ecclesiam amplificando deliberatum est: interrogatisque Patribus, censerent necne tuto procedi posse ad ejus Canonizationem; id decere quammaxime, fuit omnium assensu atque adprobatione judicatum.

"Idipsum, post multas superioribus diebus fusas ad Deum preces, Sanctitati Suae optimum factu visum est. Quapropter hodierna die, in qua Festum agitur Assumptionis B.M.V., absoluto Eucharistiae sacrificio, adstantibus R.mo cardinali Archinto Congregationi Praefecto, eodemque causae Relatore, R.P. Carolo Erskine Sub Fidei Promotore, meque infrascripto Secretario, Sanctitas Sua rite definivit: Tuto procedi posse ad Canonizationem B. Angelae Mericiae. Decretumque de Sanctificationis solemniis quandocumque celebrandis in S.R.C. acta referri, et consuetis locis proponi mandavit. XVIII Calend. Septembr. 1790".82

<sup>82</sup> AGUUR, B.10.

The news of the Decree "de tuto" was enthusiastically received by the entire Merician family, arousing a great outburst of thanksgiving culminating in the *Te Deum* sung by Ursulines throughout Europe and America, as well as in the dioceses of Brescia and Verona. But first the French Revolution, with its martyrs<sup>83</sup> and the destruction it caused, and then the Napoleonic domination, with its suppression of religious congregations, stifled in blood or in silence these hymns of thanksgiving.

Mother Luisa died at Rome on 26 January 1802, the eve of the feast of Saint Angela Merici. Over a period of time she had prepared the execution of Pius VI's Decree; "she already had everything ready - the pictures, the designs, the garlands, the standards, and most of the objects suitable for a magnificent ceremony, the sort of things usually needed for such an august occasion. But all her preoccupations and hard work would have been in vain if the solemn canonisation had had to be carried out with the meagre funds and alms collected for this purpose. And so she had the idea of pooling the funds intended for the canonisation of four other beatified persons, thereby making one fund which would be able to defray the enormous but indispensable expenses. She it was, too, who had the idea of bringing together the postulators who, with the help of persons experienced in the time-honoured regulations adopted on these occasions, would get everything ready for the execution of the Decree. And she it was who had the idea of changing certain insecure funds with a poor return to securities with a twofold yield. It was she finally who had the idea of giving the cause a uniform and unanimous direction, thanks to which it became possible to bring the affair to its desired goal, in spite of so many difficulties due to the circumstances of the times, to the divergence of views, to the diversity of interests and to the numerous obstacles which are bound to be met wherever there is a variety of opinions".84

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>83</sup> There were about a thousand Ursuline religious imprisoned. Cf. GUEUDRÉ, *Histoire, op. cit.*, tome III, *Les Ursulines aux prises avec la Révolution*, pp.109 and 158. Out of the 38 who were certainly guillotined (*Ibid.*, p.12), 27 have been beatified; these are the 16 martyrs from Orange and the 11 from Valenciennes.

Brevi cenni sulla vita, op. cit., pp.12-13. "avendo già essa in pronto i quadri, e disegni, e rami, e stendardi, e la maggior parte degli oggetti di decoroso culto, che suole adoperarsi in tale augusta funzione. Ma inutili sarebbono stati tutti i suoi pensieri e travagli, se coi piccoli fondi e limosine per questa causa si fosse dovuto procedere alla solenne canonizzazione. Suo pertanto fu il pensiere di unire i fondi destinati alla canonizzazione di altri quattro Beati, e formarne uno che potesse bastare alle vistose spese che sono indispensabili. Suo il pensiere di congregarsi i postulatori e, colla direzione di soggetti prattici delle antiche regole, solite adoperarsi in simili casi, disporre tutto il necessario per l'esecuzione. Suo il pensiere di cambiar la natura de' fondi soggetti a variazioni e, da piccolo frut-

Thanks to so much shrewd planning, it was possible for the canonisation of Angela Merici to be celebrated with every solemnity in St Peter's on 24 May 1807. At the same time, Pius VII canonised Francesco Caracciolo, Benedetto da S. Filadelfio, Colette de Corbie and Giacinta Mariscotti.

In his homily, the Pope expressed the joy of the Church for these five new saints: "Sponsa enim Christi Ecclesia, assueta iam inter persecutiones mundi et consolationes Dei peregrinando procurrere, habet in ista gloria servorum Dei, unde consoletur se in his diebus afflictionis suae". The Augustinian reminiscence was at the same time a sorrowful and a joyful actuality and was very suited to the historical circumstances which

Europe was then facing.

The homily ended with the prayer: "Fac igitur, ut veniat super nos misericordia tua, Domine, atque ut in via testimoniorum tuorum delectemur, sicut in omnibus divitiis per preces et merita sanctorum tuorum Francisci, Benedicti, Angelae, Coletae, Hyacinthae. Et quemadmodum eos Spiritu Sancto tuo replevisti, ita et nos eodem Spiritu repleamur, et Sancti Paracliti gratia roboremur per Jesum Christum filium tuum dominum nostrum, cui pariter ac tibi, et eidem Sancto Spiritui, sit gloria, honor, obsequium, imperium per omnem aeternitatem".85

The Decretal Letter of Pius VII for the canonisation is kept in the AGUUR; it consists of 26 sheets of light parchment, polished and whitened on both sides, with a thick parchment cover, whitened only inside. The sheets, of format 34.7 x 25cm, are written recto-verso, in the special Bull calligraphy. At the top of each, in the margin, there is a floral pen design in baroque style, in the same sepia colour ink as that used in the text. The letter carries the Pope's own signature with the "rota" and the pontifical motto "Dirige me in semitam rectam". The signatures of 28 cardinals follow, together with that of the cardinal "pro-Datario". The double red and white hempen cord is sealed with a leaden seal. The document carries the note "Registrata in Secretaria Brevium".86

This letter went through two printed editions, with 23 and 20 pages respectively, and measuring 28.5 x 20 and 18.8 x 12.7cm. Their title is

Sanctissimi in Christo Patris et Domini Nostri Domini Pii Divina Provi-

tato, ridurli a vacabili di più soda esistenza e di fruttato doppiamente maggiore. Suo, in fine, il pensiere dell'uniforme e unanime direzione con cui è stato portato al termine desiderato un affare, che, per le circostanze de' tempi, per la disparità nel pensare, per la diversità d'interessi, e per i molti ostacoli che naturalmente s'incontrano ove regna varietà nelle opinioni, sembra di difficile riuscita".

85 The homily was published in the *Bullarium* of the Pontificate of Pius VII; vol.482, pp.909 ff.

86 AGUUR, B.10.

DENTIA PAPAE VII, Literae Decretales super canonizatione S. Angelae Merici fundatricis Societatis S. Ursulae, Romae 1807, apud Lazarinum Rev. Camerae Apostolicae typographum.

The pontifical letter first set out the reasons which justified the inscription of Angela Merici in the catalogue of saints. It then summarised the traditional biographical data, laying stress on her strength of character in repulsing temptations, her spirit of penance, her reputation for sanctity - which was the reason why Clement VII wanted to keep her in Rome (and here one finds once again the commonplace started by Quarré and repeated by his Ursuline readers) "ut mulierum nosocomiis et gynecaeis regendis, iuvandisque praeficeret".87 Angela's virtues were exalted as well as the gifts of God with which she had been especially endowed: wisdom, prophecy, discernment of spirits.

The document then dealt with Angela's great work, namely the foundation of the Company of St Ursula, destined to spread through-

out the world:

"Brevem Regulam duodecim dispertitam capitibus concinnavit; iisque observandam proposuit, in qua, etsi ex iis votis, quae substantialia religiosae professionis sunt, nullum Societati suae injunxerit, virginitatem tamen stricte custodiendam praescripsit, ac praecipue commendavit solitudinem, obedientiam, mortificationem tum spiritualem, tum corporalem, charitatem, orationem, Sacramentorum frequentiam, aliaque pietatis officia... Mediolani autem opera S. Caroli Borromaei stabilitum est ejus Institutum, tum in alia Regna, Provincias, ultra montes et ultra maria rapido progressu propagatum est".88

Relying on the esteem which St Charles Borromeo had had for Angela, the text continued: "quin etiam sanctus Carolus Borromaeus non multis post annis dignam, quae ab Apostolica Sede in Sanctarum Virgi-

num album referretur, Brixiae palam asseruit".89

Finally, the principal points of the ordinary and apostolic processes were recapitulated, with the mention of the miracles examined for the canonisation and the confirmation of the indulgence of the 27th January (of 7 years and 7 quarantines, with the usual conditions) to be gained in the church of St Afra at Brescia (today the Sanctuary of St Angela).

Before closing with the customary formulas, the Sovereign Pontiff expressed a desire, prompted perhaps by the way the Merician family had

<sup>87</sup> Literae Decretales, original manuscript, AGUUR, B.10, f.9r; (and Bullarium Romanum Pii VII, tomus XII, Romae 1846, pp.148-155). Ibid., ff.12v-13r; f.13v.
 Ibid., f.15r.

extended thoughout the world: "Decet vero, ut in tanta hac celebritate sincere gaudeamus in Domino, patre et auctore bonorum omnium, suppliciter ab eo flagitantes, ut per intercessionem Sanctae Angelae ostendat Nobis faciem misericordiae suae, immittatque timorem sui per gentes, quae non cognoverunt eum, ut omnes nationes in una vera fide concordes Salvatorem Dominum Jesum Christum adorent et glorificent". 90

#### 4. AFTER THE CANONISATION

Owing to the political turmoil in which Europe was plunged, it had not been possible for Angela's canonisation to be accompanied by the exterior celebrations which would have attracted the attention and aroused the devotion of the universal Church towards the new Saint. Half a century later, however, a priest intervened to reawaken interest in the "Foundress of the Ursulines". This was the chaplain of the monastery of Blois in France, Abbé François-Pierre Richaudeau, a man of culture, a very faithful supporter of the Roman Catholic Church, an ardent devotee of St Angela.<sup>91</sup>

He began by mobilising the Ursuline religious of the various dioceses that they might beseech the Holy See to extend the cult of Angela Merici to the universal Church; he asked their respective ordinaries to add their support to the petitions going to Rome. And thus it was that, with the help of the superior of the monastery of Rome, he succeeded in obtaining the *Decree* of 11 July 1861, "ut Officium et Missa Sanctae Angelae Merici, Sodalitii Sanctae Ursulae institutricis, ad universam extendantur Ecclesiam; ut eius ope et meritis dignetur Dominus foemineum sexum ab omni labe immunem et errore servare, ac hostium depulsis insidiis Ecclesia sua perpetua pace laetetur". <sup>92</sup>

Informing the various houses about the Decree obtained, the superior at Rome, at the earnest request of Abbé Richaudeau, launched another initiative, namely to have a monumental statue of the Foundress sculptured and placed in the Vatican basilica.

On 1st August 1862, the Roman sculptor Pietro Galli, the superior of Rome and her councillors signed the contract<sup>93</sup> for a group of two stat-

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., f.23r.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>91</sup> Abbé Richaudeau (1806-1880) deserves a separate study. It was due to him that the first exchange of "inter-Ursuline" circulars took place, aimed at improving reciprocal knowledge among the monasteries of the Order of St Ursula. AGUUR, C.2.

 <sup>92</sup> AGUUR, B.10.
 93 AGUUR, Be.21.

ues, each of them to be carved from a single block of flawless marble and worked in the round; the whole group would stand on a travertine pedestal covered in marble, 80cm. high; the statues would represent St Angela and a little girl, respectively 4.72 and 2.70m. high. The sum agreed upon was 7,000 Roman scudi. This was an enormous sum, and only the Ursuline religious would bear the cost of it, as the Companies in Northern Italy were still suffering from the consequences of the Napoleonic suppression.

The statue was placed in St Peter's on 25 July 1866, in the second row of niches. On the pedestal were engraved the words "S. Angela Merici Virgo parens et magistra Societatis Virginum a S. Ursula".

In the meantime, another initiative which would help to make St Angela known far beyond Merician circles had been maturing. Once again it was the indefatigable zeal of the Ursuline chaplain at Blois which had started it off, together with the enthusiasm of some of the boarders who had witnessed a miracle. One of them, fallen seriously ill, had suddenly been healed on the second day of a novena to St Angela. With all the ardour of youth, they had then proposed setting up an association in honour of the Saint, committing themselves to follow her example in the practice of the Christian virtues.

Noticing the good fruits resulting from this local confraternity, Abbé Richaudeau conceived a much more ambitious plan, that of an Archconfraternity of St Angela, open to women of all ages throughout the world. A pontifical rescript, dated 17 April 1863, gave canonical status to the Archconfraternity with its headquarters at Blois. The first

article of the Rule said:

"L'Archiconfrérie a pour but:

1) De mettre les jeunes filles sous la protection de sainte Angèle.

2) De les porter à imiter, chacune selon l'état auquel Dieu l'appellera, la pureté admirable et la tendre dévotion que manifesta sainte Angèle dès son enfance et qu'elle conserva jusqu'à la mort.

3) De fortifier les associées dans la résolution de fuir, toute leur vie, les compagnies dangereuses, les mauvaises lectures et les divertissements in-

compatibles avec l'innocence de l'âme et la pureté du coeur.

4) De leur inspirer et de répandre par leur moyen, au milieu de la Société, le zèle religieux qui avait fait entreprendre à sainte Angèle de ranimer la foi dans les familles, au moyen de l'instruction chrétienne et de la pieuse éducation des jeunes filles".

For those who joined, the Director of the Archconfraternity drew up a Manual which opened with a short biographical outline of their patron Saint – an outline with the sole aim of edification and without any attempt to adhere very closely to historical reality; certain reflexions followed about the timeliness of the best known confraternities and the function they had of catalysing generous impulses and goodwill for the service and defence of the Church with prayer and action. The Director finally recommended the new Merician Archconfraternity. One passage of the programme seems to anticipate the "Catholic action" which would soon express itself in numerous forms with a much greater ecclesial impact. The text said that it was "une association nouvelle, composée de jeunes filles se proposant d'exercer un pieux apostolat, et de travailler dans les limites de la réserve et de la modestie exigées par leur âge et par leur sexe - à répandre autour d'elles la foi et l'amour des pratiques pieuses ...".94

·In addition to the prayers for various devotions and occasions, the Manual contained 31 meditations (one for each day of the month), and nearly 50 pages of a "Règle de conduite pour une jeune fille qui veut vivre chrétiennement dans le monde", plus the biography of a novice at

Blois who had died when she was twenty.95

In four months, the 3,050 copies of the Manual had run out; there were to be at least nine later reprints. In August 1864, the membership of the Archconfraternity already numbered 21,000. Giving news about it, Abbé Richaudeau stressed in particular "la joie et le zèle que mettent les Communautés à la propager, l'empressement avec lequel tant de personnes de toutes les classes de la société, même les filles des rois, demandent à en faire partie". And he explained in a note: "L'Infante d'Espagne, âgée de 13 ans, a bien voulu accepter, avec la permission de son auguste Mère, la dédicace de la traduction espagnole du Manuel de l'Archiconfrérie, et une autre fille de roi vient d'envoyer son nom pour être inscrit sur le registre, le 15 Août. Le nom de cette pieuse Princesse est accompagné de ceux de plusieurs Dames de sa Cour".96

On 6 April 1867,97 Abbé Richaudeau let it be known that he had obtained from Pius IX the decentralisation of the Archconfraternity, with permission for the local confraternities to be incorporated in it.

95 [RICHAUDEAU], L'Apostolat de la jeune fille chrétienne. Manuel de l'Archiconfrérie de Sainte Angèle, établie dans le Monastère des Religieuses Ursulines de Blois par Décret de Sa Sainteté le Pape Pie IX

en date du 17 avril 1863, Blois, au Monastère des Ursulines, 1864.

97 Circ. n.14 bis.

<sup>94</sup> RICHAUDEAU, Circ. n.5, 15 October 1863, AGUUR, C.2.

<sup>66</sup> Circ. n.8, 14 August 1864. In the 2nd Register of the Archconfraternity, one can read the following names among those who enrolled on 15 August 1864: "M.lle la princesse Sophie, duchesse de Saxe, fille du Roi de Saxe; M.me la comtesse Pauline de Mayhaus de Cormons, dame d'honneur; M.me la comtesse Charlotte Seinsheim, dame d'honneur de la reine veuve Marie de Saxe; la comtesse Marie Straeschwitz[?]; M.me la comtesse Antoinette de Pakisch". AGUUR, Nb.84.

Membership had now reached 42,000, and by 1869 had exceeded by a long way the 50,000 mark. The graces obtained through the intercession of St Angela multiplied, giving a fresh impetus also to Merician devotion and increasing all the time the circle of those who knew and admired the "Foundress of the Ursulines".

The Franco-Prussian War, the fall of the Papal States and the Kulturkampf, as well as the confiscation of ecclesiastical goods which followed, the suppression of the religious congregations resulting from Combes' laws in France, then the First World War, all these events led to a weakening of the bonds between the members of the Archconfraternity, spread throughout the world with the headquarters at Blois. After 1918, in actual fact, some halfhearted efforts were made to restart the movement, but they were nearly all localized in the West of France, then in Great Britain and in Belgium. In 1933, twenty-two members registered in Georgetown; the last to have their names inscribed numbered fifty-two in the fourth Register of the Archconfraternity on 27 January 1952; they came from Dallas, in Texas.<sup>98</sup>

Lay-women, in the meantime, especially the younger generations, had moved towards the new Catholic associations which had come into being with more specific programmes of action. These movements responded better to the multiple demands of a society in rapid evolution and were more directly inserted in the broad ecclesial movement in which the Church of the Second Vatican Council would gradually take shape.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>98</sup> AGUUR, Nb.84.

# Chapter V THE RULE OF THE COMPANY OF SAINT URSULA

In 1866, the bishop of Brescia wanted to restore the Company of St Ursula. Elisabetta Girelli, who collaborated with her sister Maddalena in this work of restoration, wrote a *Vita di S. Angela*<sup>1</sup> in which she summarised the principal events in the first centuries of the institution. This led her to express regret at the consequences of the Napoleonic suppression and the loss of the "convento di S. Orsola", where those members used to live who "through poverty, illness or for other domestic reasons were left alone and without support from their family and were assisted by the charity of their sister-members living together".

Chapter 51 finished on this note of regret. Elisabetta began Chapter 52, "Come fu per la prima volta alterata la Regola", with the words: "The greatest harm, however, which the Company suffered in the course of its history was, in my view, the one which wounded it in its most vital part, in the Rule". As the rest of this chapter will show, this was a true statement, even if Elisabetta was unaware of it, even if she was basing her argument on what we know today to be an erroneous assumption.

Now that the discovery of the Trivulzian codex has reinforced our belief in the authenticity of the text of the Rule known to us, the words of the Foundress reach out to us in a more immediate and genuine way; and so we feel we have an even greater duty to examine the documents at our disposal in order to try and reconstruct, if possible, the chequered history of the Rule of the Company.

We will also present some other Rules which seem particularly significant to us, whether they are derived from the Merician Rule or not.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> ELISABETTA GIRELLI, Della Vita di S. Angela Merici vergine bresciana e del suo santo Istituto, Tipografia e Libreria vescovile Queriniana, Brescia, 3ª edizione, 1903: "per povertà, infermità od altre ragioni domestiche rimanevano sole e senza appoggio dei parenti; ed erano assistite dalla carità delle consorelle vivendo in comune".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.215-216: "Il maggior danno però, che la Compagnia abbia sofferto nel corso dei tempi, fu a mio credere, quello che la ferì per così dire nella sua parte vitale, nella Regola".

#### 1. THE RULE OF ANGELA MERICI

We have already spoken about the composition, the juridical value and the successive approvals of the Rule of Angela Merici.<sup>3</sup> But we have not examined closely either its moral teaching or especially its high spiritual value, founded on a profound experience of self-emptying and of interior virginity (poverty and chastity as presented in Angela's Rule), which for her are the primary conditions for nuptial union with Christ. Nor have we stressed her constant turning to Christ in order to lead the virgins of the Company to imitate his way of life and thus to be able truly to conform to him. The roots of Angela's multiform maternity reach down into this undivided love. Those who would like to concentrate on the spiritual aspect of the the Merician message could read Divo Barsotti's book on this subject.<sup>4</sup>

The oldest text of the Regola known today is that of the Trivulzian codex: Regula della Compagnia de Santa Orsola which we are publishing as D1.<sup>5</sup> The carefully finished writing (without decorations or framed capital letters) suggests that the manuscript may have been prepared for printing. It consists of seven pages dedicated "Al lettore", written instead of a preface, the contents, the prologue and the eleven chapters of the Rule.

The analysis of the dedication reveals, beyond the apparent vagueness of the discourse, certain particularities which enable us to formulate a few suggestions regarding to whom it was addressed and, as a result, the reasons and the circumstances of the assumed publication.

It is indeed evident that the printed edition (if it was a question of printing) was not addressed to the virgins of the Company in particular, but to persons of any class and social condition, men and women, irrespective of age. This can be deduced from the following fact: the Rule is presented not only as formula of Institute offered to its members but also as formula of life for a personal renewal, proposed to simple Christians so that each one may find in it, according to his or her grace and circumstances, the inspiration and the incentive for a more evangelical way of life. The invitation excludes no-one: "Men and women, big and small, young and old, come; come, you widows with your chastity, you married folk with your continence, you sinners with your conversion. Let

<sup>5</sup> Cf. supra, Pt.I, Ch.I, 3.a and passim.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Analytical index, under "Regola".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> DIVO BARSOTTI, La spiritualità di Sant' Angela Merici. Una famiglia attorno alla Madre, Morcelliana, Brescia 1980. This work, however, has certain historical and critical weaknesses.

everyone come who wishes to direct his or her steps towards heaven; because, the more numerous we are, the greater will be our joy. And Jesus Christ Our Lord will be even more in our midst. Not only his virtue but also his power will shine forth even more".

The reasons for the possible printing seem to us to be just as clear: to make the text of the Rule better known, so as to give an accurate knowledge of the Company in all its more exterior and visible aspects. The attention of the author of this preface seems to focus in particular on the pragmatic aspect of the Merician foundation: "I really do not know who could be ignorant and foolish enough not to appreciate the value and usefulness of this glorious life". And he goes on to explain: the Company causes no trouble; the parents of the virgins are not abandoned; no dowry is required; no monasteries have to be built; the virgins are exemplary and submissive. Moreover, "they are not introducing anything new; they are seeking only to renew themselves and, by their example and exhortations, to bring others to the ancient values and customs which were formerly produced in hearts by the Holy Spirit, especially among the early Christians". It almost looks as if the author was trying to remove from the Company any suspicion of eccentricity, of extravagance, or worse, of heterodoxy.

More complex is the task of reconstructing the circumstances in which the project of making the Rule of the Company known to a wider public could be realised. One gains the impression that attitudes of distrust or even of downright spite and hostility were not lacking among this public. The author of the preamble poses a rhetorical question which seems to have a definite purpose: "Who is the person who would be envious or spiteful enough to dare to open his mouth boldly? Instead of wanting to change, and change very quickly, his bitter poison into loving-kindness or, at least, withdrawing into himself, preferring to remain hidden? Does he not see that he cannot, without doing great harm to himself, bring into the open any kind of scandal of odious darkness?".

Bringing the dedication "to the reader" to an end, the writer gives the warning: "We want, by the innermost depths of the Lord's compassion, to beseech each one of those who would already think boldly and none too lightly of finding fault with this union and this Rule, to take the trouble to look at and to examine carefully their value and goodness. And if he does this, may the blessing of the Holy Spirit be always on that person. But if he wants to do otherwise, he should know that he will be opposing heaven in vain".

<sup>6</sup> D1, "Al lettore".

These lines confirm what we have already said in Pt.III, Ch.I about the deterioration in the atmosphere surrounding the Company. And there come to mind certain expressions of Cozzano whose irritation is reflected in the gloomy overtones of his realistic language: "The dragon's fury is greatly enkindled.... I do not want at present to enumerate to you all the different wiles and betrayals that he has been forced to make use of, and is still trying to make use of. How he would like to close mouths, so that there is no further mention of the Foundress, spewing out his steamy breath, as ill-judged as it is venomous, on the wise and holy things that she has done, saying that she could have been mistaken and, by subtle means, stripping her of her reputation and of the faith people have in her. How he obscures the value of the Company, and how he does not want her praises to spread".<sup>7</sup>

The point was even reached of casting doubt on the Foundress' eternal salvation, "poking fun and turning a nose up at the Company. What is this Company that everyone is vying with each other to deride!" The editors hoped perhaps that a better knowledge of her programme of life would help to rehabilitate her. Hence the proposal to make

the Rule better known by getting it printed.

In this dedication to the reader, the name of the Foundress does not appear, nor does it in the Prologue to the Rule. Is this because of the wave of distrust about which we have just spoken? We do not know. It is a fact that the origin of the Company is spoken of in very diplomatic terms, attributing it to God's wisdom, experience and help: "And so, on the collective view of numerous wise and experienced persons, especially of the oldest and most experienced virgins of the Company, and with the help of God, this brief institution has been composed, which we want to be called the Rule of the Company of St Ursula".

This Rule is evaluated from the moral point of view according to the criteria of rational and ecclesiastical judgment: "People should know, as is fitting, that this Rule is just as good and valid as it is reasonable and in conformity with the counsels and the spirit of Holy Church and that it is recognised as such by the Bishop our pastor; and then (if it is neces-

sary) [it will be] confirmed by the Sovereign Pontiff".

This last statement is of great importance to us, as it helps to fix the date of the transcription. It clearly comes before 14 April 1546, the date of the publication of Paul III's Bull of approval for the Company. Regarding the "terminus a quo", we notice that in the chapter on dress, the

<sup>7</sup> COZZANO, Risposta, op. cit., D23, ff.4v-5r.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., f.19r.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., f.14v.

words "cingulo de la cintura" have already been inserted; but the decision to impose the cincture had been taken on 11 December 1545.

As for the author of the dedication, a number of the expressions he uses – which we are stressing – suggest someone directly involved in the affairs of the Company: "our new Congregation", "we want it to be called Rule of the Company", "out of obligation and according to some of our laws". There are also echoes and reminiscences of Merician expressions, which betray the author as someone with an intimate knowledge of the Writings of the Foundress. And the author must even have known Cozzano's Risposta, or at least the arguments he had used in it, because

memories of them also frequently appear.

He must also have had a clear idea of the type of engagement to which the virgins were committing themselves when they entered the Company, since he says that the Rule is not binding under pain of sin, and so leaving the Company does not constitute a sin by virtue of the Rule. But the virgin who does go off must consider carefully "if it seems natural and reasonable to climb to the summit in order then to descend from it, to leave the better in order to apply oneself to something worse ...". Was the author perhaps the spiritual director? Or a member of that clergy who had hastened to come to the defence of the Company of St Ursula when it was stricken and weakened by trials? Or perhaps even Cozzano himself who, with an eye on those who would be receiving the message, had moderated a little his habitual impetuosity?

Was this manuscript then handed over to be printed? It seems unlikely, as there is no trace whatsoever of any edition of it. The internal difficulties which shook the institutional framework may have acted as a catalyst to energies and interests to the point of suggesting a dignified reserve with regard to the Company, rather than a kind of publicity

which would have highlighted its dissensions and weaknesses.

Whatever the underlying implication of the affair, it can be assumed that the original of this text had been kept in the Archives of the Company. We think this can be deduced from the fact that during the canonical Process for Angela Merici, Brescia handed over to the Sacred Congregation of Rites a manuscript in which the Rule was preceded by a truncated introduction, beginning with the words "ogni cosa ragionevole". These same words are to be found in the dedication to the reader in the Trivulzian codex. In the Brescian manuscript sent to Rome, this prologue had been crossed out several times with a pen, from top to bottom of each page. The *Summarium additionale* describes this Brescian codex<sup>10</sup> and mentions, after what is called "prologue", a "short encomium

<sup>10</sup> D37. This manuscript may be the one from which Doneda extracted some lines about the way the

of the virginal state", which could well be the last part of the dedication to the reader; then came the contents of the work and another "prologus a fol.1 ad 4, sed pariter ut primus deletus", also crossed out like the preceding one. This was the "proemio" which precedes the Merician Rule in the texts that we know today. In the Trivulzian manuscript, as we have said, it comes after the contents, where it is entitled "Prologo", at the beginning of the chapters of the Rule.

In the Brescian manuscript transmitted to Rome, therefore, the text of the actual Regola began with the words: "Del modo di ricever Cap. I", exactly as in the Trivulzian manuscript, and it ended with the same words: "et chiarissima verginal corona". The pagination, however, does not tally. The Trivulzian codex is numbered on the right hand page but is written on the left and on the right; the Brescian one, lost today, was numbered by folios. It is the comparative study of the Trivulzian manuscript with the Brescian one as described to us by the Summarium which leads us to think that the latter had been numbered by folios, with the writing of the text on the right-hand page only, making a total of 26 pages. Only the explicit of the Rule was on the back of f.26.

The Summarium says nothing about how the "Confirmatio" and the "Concessio" of Lorenzo Muzio were presented, or the "Ordinatione" of the two conservators (which justified the insertion of the imposition of the cincture); we do not know, therefore, if they were added to the Rule in some way or copied out at the end of it. None of these three documents appear in the Trivulzian codex.

Three and a half pages of the Trivulzian manuscript are devoted to the Prologue, written in very close handwriting and followed immediately by the first chapter of the Rule, without the space one would have expected.

Was the text of the Prologue the same in the two manuscripts? If so, one can understand why there had been the erasure in the manuscript sent to Rome. These first four pages seemed like an unsigned letter addressed "Alle dilette figlie et sorelle de la Compagnia di Sant'Orsola", and so they did not appear – in the strict sense of the term – like a juridical document, which is what a Rule should be.

It is impossible not to call to mind here the words of Cozzano when he was speaking about drawing up the Rule under Angela's dictation: "It

virgins should dress. The text which he extrapolated is the same as the version in the Trivulzian codex: "... in uno de' primi esemplari manoscritti della Regola si legge al cap.2: Le veste denno essere... di colore come sarìa di bruna, o de taneto oscuro, o de beretino, o de morello oscuro, sì come a cadauna secondo la lor possibilità convegnarà". DONEDA, Vita, op. cit., p.76.

was written by my own hand and it was entirely composed by me. But the contents were by the Holy Spirit, dictated through the intermediary of the Foundress.... She alone, under divine inspiration, was the foundress of such a great work. She is the real and living mother, who has generated and regenerated them in the Word of truth and in the Blood of Jesus Christ. But in a preliminary letter which she made me write, she wanted to be numbered among the others and her name to be omitted; it was out of humility or perhaps for some other reasons and motives which are hidden in the divine secrets".<sup>11</sup>

This "lettera proemiale" is the key to understanding the rules which follow; it exalts the sublime dignity of the consecrated virgins; it suggests what steps they should take to remain faithful; it puts them on their guard against the assaults of the devil; it makes known the secret of Christian consolation which does not diminish in spite of struggles and difficulties.

The Turlino edition would simplify one of the passages in these words: "the elements and all hell will rise up against us". Angela, in more realistic language which recalled some personal experiences, had dictated: "the water, the air and the earth with the whole of hell will rise up against us". There may have surfaced in her consciousness some instinctive fears: of the storms and winds which had hammered their ship on the tempestuous Adriatic; of the terrible flooding of the Mella; of the bursting of the Garza banks in the city and outside; or of the earthquake which three times had sent tremors through Brescia in 1527, filling the population with fear. Angela knew the meaning of the words: "the water, the air and the earth with the whole of hell will rise up against us".

The Turlino edition also made another modification in Angela's Prologue by the suppression of the words of address: "To my very dear daughters and sisters of the Company of St Ursula". This suppression may appear regrettable because it seems to weaken the spontaneity of a "piazzevole ed humana" femininity. It produced one good result however: the Prologue, without its function of dedicatory letter, was integrated into the Rule with the title: "Proemio. Capitolo primo", thereby

11 COZZANO, Dichiarazione, op. cit., [f.974r].

Regarding when the Mella and the Garza rivers were in flood in 1527, 1531 and 1532, cf. PASERO, Il dominio veneto, op. cit., pp.314-315, n.6. Brescia was hit by an earthquake on 8 January 1527 late in the morning; on 3 June by a slight tremor in the middle of the night and by a much stronger one at the beginning of the afternoon; but the worst was on 29 May, eve of the Feast of the Ascension, when from 16 to 17 hours (that is, between 10 and 11 hours in the morning) the city had been terrified by the force of the earthquake. BARTOLOMEO PALAZZO, Diario, op. cit., in GUERRINI, Cronache bresciane, op. cit., pp.329-330; NASSINO, Registro, op. cit., p.63.

increasing by one the original numbering of the following eleven chapters. From the textual point of view this was certainly not a big thing, but from the juridical point of view this change gave the Prologue a special value: it became an integral part of the message which the Madre entrusted to the virgins of the Company as a rule of life.

The document which we are publishing as D3 presents a synopsis of the Trivulzian manuscript text and Turlino's printed one. Such a synopsis makes it possible to recognise the variants, but we are not going to linger over them here.

There are three variants, though, which we need to point out immediately; two are in connection with the contents and one helps us with

the dating.

The first one is in the chapter on dress and concerns the imposition of the leather belt, but a comparison between the two texts shows that this requirement comes in different places. In the Trivulzian manuscript, it is inserted in a sequence of negative prescriptions, thereby breaking the rhythm: "The sisters may wear the clothes they had when they entered the Company, but only as long as these clothes last, it being understood, however, that they will not wear flounces of any kind, nor slashed sleeves, nor open lace-work or embroidery and any other similar decorations; and that they will wear a belt as a sign of exterior mortification and of perfect interior chastity. And they will not wear either silk or velvet, no silver or gold; and no slippers or shoes which are not black and simple in style".

In the Turlino edition, the logical sequence of the thought is broken: "Her dress must be of coarse cloth or serge, black or brown, or even a dark grey or brown, depending on what is possible for each one. She will wear a long leather belt as a sign of exterior mortification and of interior and perfect chastity. However, the sisters may wear the clothes they had when they entered the Company and continue to wear them as long as they last".

In both cases the interpolation is obvious and awkward. It looks as if a marginal gloss may have been retrieved by two different copyists and inserted by them in two different places according to where they thought best. The marginal gloss may have been added to the original text when discussion was going on about the timeliness of wearing a distinctive sign.

But the transcription of the Trivulzian must have taken place before 21 June 1546, and we are helped on this point by another variant, this time in the chapter on acceptance, in connection with inscription in the "authentic book". Now it is precisely on 21 June 1546 that this book

was introduced; but the Trivulzian codex makes no reference to it, a sign that it received no mention in the original text.

A third variant suggests that it also may have been a marginal gloss, awkwardly interpolated in the Trivulzian manuscript, while in the Turlino edition it is logically placed. The printed text states that the virgins of the government must "visit every fortnight (or more or less often as required) all the other virgins, their sisters, who live in the town". On the other hand the manuscript text says: "and the four men will act as agents and fathers in the day-to-day needs of the Company, or more or less often as required".

Given the structural identity between the Trivulzian Regola and the one which is described in the Summarium additionale, given also the identity between their respective explicits, we can assume that, with the exception of the above-mentioned interpolations in the chapters on dress and on government, we have here the authentic text of Angela Merici.

A critical reading of the two Regole will certainly bring to light

other interesting points, and not just from the linguistic angle.

In the chapter on prayer for example, two variants in the Trivulzian text reveal a greater spontaneity of expression and a more refined sensitivity. With reference to interior desires and exterior attractions, we read in the printed text: "Do not let them turn me away from the glory shining on your face, which is the consolation of every suffering heart". In the manuscript text the words are: "Do not let them turn me away from the glory shining on your face, which satisfies every suffering heart". And further on, still in the same prayer, where Angela asks pardon for herself and for her family, the Trivulzian text says: "I beg you for this by your most sacred Passion and by your Precious Blood shed for love of us, by your holy Name, may it be blessed above the sand of the sea, above the drops of water [of rain], above the multitude of stars". Perhaps with the lines of Psalm 148 in mind, there pours forth a lyrical prayer of the contemplative with her eyes fixed on the shores of the infinite sea, on the playful rain-laden clouds, on the myriads of stars dotting the sky as it serenely stretches its arc across the earth. But in the printed text, after a clumsy start from the point of view of syntax, the image fades away: "This I beg you, by your most sacred Passion and by your Precious Blood shed for love of us, by your holy Name Jesus; may it be held holy in heaven and on earth and with all the heavenly choirs of angels and archangels".

This is not the place to express a preferential opinion about these two texts; each has its own merit: the Regola of the Trivulzian manuscript because it is certainly the more ancient and its language belongs to

the time of Angela Merici; the printed one of Turlino because its value has been enhanced by the various decrees of approval and because it was published at the time of Domenico Bollani, a pastor devoted to his duty, attentive to any manifestation of an ecclesiastical or religious nature and who, during the years 1562-1563 at the Council of Trent, had belonged to the Commission for the Index of forbidden books.<sup>13</sup>

Comparing the two texts side by side, moreover, draws attention to the respect with which the text dictated by the Foundress has been treated. Not one of the variants in the printed edition strikes at the fundamental principles or modifies any disciplinary point, not even a minor one. No-one even dared to introduce the expression "colonelle" which had already come into use in Angela's own day, or the office of the principal mother, legal representative, the omission of which had been deplored in the notarial act of 18 March 1537.

After more than thirty years, most of the variants were limited to points of a linguistic nature; the strong spiritual and human import of Angela Merici's Rule remained intact.

### 2. THE RULE OF BRESCIA

The history of the Rule of the Company of St Ursula at Brescia and of its various publications is now going to cover a span of four centuries. We will try and set out the significant stages of this long journey.

## a) The Borromean reform

After the death of the bishop of Brescia, Domenico Bollani, which took place on 12 August 1579, Cardinal Borromeo began his apostolic visit of the diocese. One of the consequences of this visit was the reform of the Merician Rule.

We have already spoken of the period of institutionalisation which the Company of St Ursula was undergoing at that time,<sup>14</sup> and we have pointed out how, in practice, some norms and structures had been introduced, the origin of which has not yet been completely established and for which the printed Regola, in force at that particular time, made no allowance.

Cardinal Borromeo - whether directly or through an intermediary

14 Cf. supra, Pt.III, Ch.III.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> MOLINARI, Domenico Bollani, op. cit., p.10.

we do not know<sup>15</sup> – undertook the revision of the Merician work through a rearrangement of its rule of life, and this was printed under the title of:

- Regola della Compagnia di S. Orsola di Brescia, di nuovo revista, corretta et confirmata da Monsignor illustrissimo Carlo cardinale di S. Prassede, arcivescovo di Milano et Visitatore Apostolico, in Brescia, appresso Pietro Maria Marchetti, 1582. In-8°.

A copy signed by Cardinal Borromeo is at Brescia, in the Archives of the Ursuline monastery. Another one exists in the Vatican Library (Barberini D.I.51) and there is also one in the Biblioteca Queriniana (Cinq. I.I.3).

The introduction consists of the letter which Cardinal Borromeo had sent "Alla madre, madonne governatrici, et alle vergini della Compagnia di Santa Orsola"; we searched in vain for this letter in the "edizione anastatica con apparato critico" which Luigi Rinaldini made of this Regola. Such an omission is really inexplicable and quite unjustified. 16

"Among the numerous spiritual consolations and satisfactions which it has pleased God our Lord to communicate to us during our visit, my very dear daughters in Christ, not among the least has been the one of finding in your devoted Company such great progress in the way of the Lord, so many living examples of sisters truly searching to imitate the blessed virgin and martyr St Ursula and her companions, under whose name they serve God with ardent desires. And this has enabled us, notwithstanding all the other occupations of our visit, to find it not a burden to revise, renew and approve your Rules and Ordinances, so as to satisfy your desires and to bring you as much aid as possible ... And so, as our desire to help you is not less than your desire to be helped by us, we are in no doubt that you, on your part, by your prompt and diligent execution and observance of these rules, will draw abundant fruit from them, accepting willingly all that is laid down for you by this

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> The manuscript already referred to, with the modifications in the chapter on government (which is increased from one to 16 chapters) and which is in the ASDM, only carries the cardinal's signature; it is not in his handwriting. We did not find the manuscript with the new version of the Prologue and the other ten chapters of the Merician Rule. The final result, as a whole, seems to be more likely the work of Curial officers or other priests, close to the Company, certainly better versed in its archives-documents than in Merician spirituality.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> As well as the letter, Rinaldini likewise omitted the frontispiece of the Regola with its full title which said "revista, corretta et confirmata", without giving any reason for the omission. And in his translation of the Decree of approval signed by the cardinal, on p.255, Rinaldini also simplified the words "diligenter recognitas et emendatas" to "diligentemente riviste". What is more, the anastatic reproduction only begins on page 5; as a result, the heading (which thus becomes the title), "Nel nome della SS. Trinità, Regola della Compagnia di S. Orsola di Brescia", can lead the reader, who is not aware of the fact, into the error of thinking that this is the real Rule of Angela Merici.

means, and recognising that this is given to you by the very generous hand of God".<sup>17</sup>

This letter was published again in several editions of the Rule of the

Company (e.g. 1620, 1672, 1673, 1795).

The publisher Marchetti dedicated the 1582 edition to the Brescian Giovan Francesco Bucceleni, doctor *utriusque juris* and canon of the cathedral church of Brescia. In the four pages of dedication, Marchetti praised the cardinal's action in emphatic language, devoid of any critical note. These pages can be read in the copy kept in the Vatican Library. Resorting to the image of the good and diligent gardener who looks after a fruitful tree, Marchetti wrote: "It seems to me ... that this is what has happened to the rule of the virgins of St Ursula, which was rediscovered in this garden of Brescia by the most illustrious and reverend Cardinal Borromeo who, not finding it as well looked after and in as perfect a condition as he had apparently expected it to be, did not fail, diligent gardener of souls that he is, to work on it with his own hand, weeding it, adding to it and watering it with his favour until it was brought to this degree of perfection ...".18b

The amendments due to the revision made by the cardinal can be divided into two categories: those of a practical-disciplinary nature, and those which seem to concern just the wording of the text but which, nevertheless, have important repercussions on the spirituality.

We have already spoken of the first aspect when presenting the modifications made to the structure of the Company's government and to some of the disciplinary rules, as for example in the chapter on dress <sup>19</sup>; we would also point out the chapter on fasting.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Regola, Brescia 1582, pp.3-4: "Fra le molte consolationi et contenti spirituali, che è piacciuto a Dio nostro Signore communicarci in questa nostra visita, figliuole in Christo carissime, non è stata delle minori quella, che habbiamo ricevuta havendo trovato in questa vostra devota Compagnia tanto buon progresso nella via del Signore, tanti vivi essempi di chi veramente cerchi essere imitatrice di quella beata vergine et martire santa Orsola et delle sue Compagne, sotto il cui nome con accesi desiderii servite a Dio. Questo ha fatto, che non habbiamo sentito la fatica, fra tante altre occupationi di questa visita, di rivedere, rinovare et approvare le vostre Regole et Ordini, per sodisfare ai vostri desiderii, et per darvi quel maggiore aiuto che possiamo... Hora, come non è stato minore il nostro desiderio di aiutarvi, che il vostro di essere da noi aiutate, così non dubitiamo che voi, all'incontro, con la pronta et diligente essecutione et osservanza di esse regole, procurarete cavarne abondante frutto, ricevendo et riconoscendo dalla liberalissima mano di Dio tutto quello indirizzo, che per questo mezo vi vien datto...".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> They follow Cardinal Borromeo's Decree of approval, which is on page [135].

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18b</sup> "Così mi pare... che sia avvenuto della regola delle vergini di S. Orsola, la quale, ritrovata in questo giardino di Brescia dall'illustrissimo et reverendissimo cardinale Borromeo non assai bene coltivata et perfetta quanto parea che fosse bisogno, non ha mancato, come diligentissimo giardiniero dell'anime, lavorarla con la sua dotta mano, levandogli, aggiongendogli, et inaffiandola co'l suo favore fino che l'habbia condotta a questo grado di perfettione...".

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Analytical index, under "Borromeo".

The thinking behind the textual changes which we could call "formal" is more subtle or more specious, and seems to have been prompted by fear of possible deviations of interpretation.

The first change we want to present concerns the sacrament of confession. Angela had no intention of dealing with the forgiveness of sins from a doctrinal point of view, but wanted to remind her daughters of the duty and the advantages of frequent confession, and also about the conditions necessary to enable the maximum profit to be derived from it. At a time when Protestantism was actually attacking sacramental confession, Angela's chapter, by its clearness and firmness on the subject, constituted a courageous stand. The pedagogic function of her teaching - a teaching which was not vague, ambiguous or heretical - seems to have totally escaped the attention of the reviser. In her incisive language, never a word too many, Angela had wanted to say, going against the common stream: go to confession, go often to confession, make a good confession, omitting nothing so that the priest may absolve you with full knowledge of the facts. But in the amended Rule the didactic paragraph was dropped, together with the gospel quotation about the power of the keys being handed over to Peter.20

A second amendment which weakened the Merician text comes in the chapter on obedience. The theme had been introduced in a general way by the words: "Again, we urge each one to keep to holy obedience, the only real denial of one's own will which exists in us like a kind of dark hell. That is why Jesus said: 'Non veni facere voluntatem meam, sed eius qui misit me Patris', meaning: 'I have not come to do my own will but that of my Father who sent me'. For obedience is like a great light in man, which makes all his deeds good and worthy of approval".

The passage was cut down in the following way: "Again, we urge each one to keep to holy obedience, the only real denial of one's own will. Indeed, obedience founded on charity is like a great light in man, which makes all his deeds good and worthy of approval. Each one of you, therefore, ...". Thus omitted is one's own will regarded as being dangerously opposed to that of God, which draws its full significance from the words of Christ quoted by Angela: "Non veni facere ..."; the conflict between the two wills which had led Christ to the agony at Gethsemane is passed over in silence.

To refute this amendment, let us borrow some of the arguments

For a more complete refutation of the amendments introduced in the Borromean Regola, see LEDÓCHOWSKA, La Regola del 1582, cit., p.13.

used by Teresa Ledóchowska: "In order to understand a text, it is necessary to look at the whole context and the meaning of the terms used. Here again, Angela does not use the technical language of the moralists. For her, and it is a marvel that she had such a clear intuition about it, obedience is profoundly theological; it is the complete subordination of one's own will to that of God. Let us listen to Angela's words as she recapitulates the chapter on obedience: 'Finally, obey God and all creatures for the love of God'. From this perspective, the expression 'one's own will' takes on another meaning. One's own will, as it appears from the context, means an 'autonomous' will in relation to the divine will; it is a will which, far from making itself subordinate to God's will, is in opposition to it. But opposition to God is the very essence of sin; and is not sin itself comparable to a 'dark hell'? St Angela does not waste time on dissertations about free will or on grace; everything is there".<sup>21</sup>

A few lines further on, and still in the chapter on obedience, the reviser would amend yet another Merician expression, to which attention should be drawn: "And above all, obey the counsels and inspirations which the Holy Spirit unceasingly sends into our hearts. We shall distinguish his voice more clearly in the measure in which our conscience is purified and unsullied". Angela asked her daughters to listen attentively to the interior voice of the Holy Spirit; but she also pointed out to them the criteria of discernment, so that they would not fall into the danger of confusing the Holy Spirit with their own will: First of all, they must purify their conscience of sin, and then try to remain in this state of purity reached through self-emptying, detachment, adhesion to God's will. The voice of the Spirit would then make itself heard clearly, and the interpretation of it would be sound.

The text was replaced by the following: "Obey the interior inspirations which, with the judgment and the approval of the spiritual Father, they will know come to them from the Holy Spirit".

It was no longer the teaching of Angela Merici. To understand exactly what the Madre had meant, it seems appropriate to re-read the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p.14: "Per capire un testo bisogna vedere tutto il contesto e il significato dei suoi termini. Ancora una volta, Angela non usa il linguaggio tecnico dei moralisti. Per lei, ed è molto bello che lo abbia intuito con tanta chiarezza, l'obbedienza è profondamente teologale: una subordinazione assoluta della volontà propria a quella di Dio. Ecco come Angela riassume il capitolo sull'obbedienza: 'Hor ultimamente obedire a Dio, et ad ogni creatura per amor divino'. In questa prospettiva il termine 'volontà propria' prende anche un altro senso. La volontà propria, come appare dal contesto, significa una volontà 'autonoma' nei confronti della volontà divina, che, lungi dal subordinarsi ad essa, le si oppone. Ora, l'opposizione a Dio è l'essenza stessa del peccato; e questo non è forse comparabile ad un 'inferno di tenebre'? Sant'Angela non si dilunga in disquisizioni sul libero arbitrio né sulla grazia: e questo è tutto".

words of Cozzano: "And then, obedience is admirable in this, that in a new and special way, God gives and promises, in the hearts of those who wish to live under this obedience, the continuous voice of the Holy Spirit, and they must listen to this voice constantly so that they know how to govern themselves in everything, while still living in the tempestuous sea of this world. This special grace is not so necessary in the monasteries, because the religious are continuously in front of people's eyes which see and watch over them.

"How much more admirable is this life, such that, while living in the most corrupt century there has ever been, they remain holy and upright with the help of this special aid divinely bestowed upon them. It imparts to them a strength which is all the greater in that it comes from God without any intermediary; it is God who strikes directly at their heart. And so true is this, that the same Holy Spirit who at present is operating these things (because it is his pleasure to do so) has induced the Foundress to lay special stress on the precept of this in the Rule, saying: And above all, obey the inspirations of the Holy Spirit".<sup>22</sup>

Another amendment, which we do not want to pass over in silence, is to be found in the chapter on poverty. Angela had spoken about the "material poverty relating to temporal things" ["povertà del effetto"] and, in contrast, about the "poverty of spirit by which man strips his heart of all attachment" ["affetto"]. The first part of the phrase, corrected, became "affective poverty relating to temporal things" ["affetto delle cose temporali"]. Apart from the fact that it is meaningless, the variant modifies a word which, both in the Trivulzian manuscript and in the Turlino edition, raised no ambiguity of meaning.

This Brescian Regola, "revised, corrected and confirmed" by Charles Borromeo, would enjoy a very wide circulation, due in part to the prestige of the archbishop of Milan. Other Rules, for other Companies, would have their origin from it.

# b) The 1620 edition

Nearly a century was to pass before the Rule revised by Charles Borromeo was subjected to any considerable change. The new version, however, could hardly be called a success since it was replaced by another edition the following year, preventing as it were its ever being reprinted. We are referring to the Brescian editions of 1672 ("Brescian" even though printed in Bologna) and 1673.

<sup>22</sup> COZZANO, Risposta, D23, f.42r-v.

· In the meantime, there appeared at the same time as Gondi's Vita della Beata Angela, the

- Regola della Compagnia di Santa Orsola di Brescia, già revista et approvata dalla santa et felicissima memoria di S Carlo, all'hora Card. illustriss. et reverendiss. di S. Prassede, arcivescovo di Milano et visitatore apostolico. Di novo emendata da diversi errori scorsi nella stampa, con la gionta della copia del Breve Apostolico di papa Paolo III. Aggiuntovi la vita della B. Angela fondatrice; co'l Sermone fatto alle Vergini Demesse dal P.F. Paolo da Terni, predicatore capuccino, il giorno di S Caterina 1619. In Brescia, appresso Pietro Maria Marchetti, 1620.

The Vita was the one which Gondi had published in 1600; the Regola clearly owes its origin to the Borromean Regola with a few variants – and not only of a linguistic nature; but there is no indication as to who

had been responsible for getting it reprinted.

The dedication "Al pio Lettore" carries no signature or initials. The author was certainly a careful and precise person who expressed himself clearly. Suffice it to note the following remark about the "Rule suggested (as it is believed) by Mother Angela herself and approved by the Very Reverend Ordinaries, then finally revised, renewed and approved with the ordinances and statutes of the Company, by the holy and very happy memory of Cardinal Borromeo of S. Praxedes, archbishop of

Milan and apostolic visitor ...".23

The author of the dedication thus distinguished between the Rule of the Foundress and the ordinances and statutes of the Company added on later. He also showed that he knew about the new foundations which had taken place in other regions of Italy; he knew that from France requests were coming "con grande instanza" for "la Regola, la Vita, la effigie della B. Angela". Perhaps it was he who, to the 26 chapters of the Borromean Rule, added a 27th: "Avvertimenti per la fondatione et governo della Compagnia fuori per la Diocese". It was a corollary to the preceding chapter in the sense that it required the centralisation of the government in the city of Brescia; it was aimed at preventing little groups of the Company from springing up all over the diocese, each with its own peculiarities.

Another variant deserves attention: the Ricordi, which were addressed "Alle Avisatrici" in the reformed Rule of 1582, are given a new

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> Regola, Brescia 1620, p.4: "Regola suggerita (come si crede) dell'istessa madre Angela; la quale fu approbata dai Reverendissimi Ordinarii, et poi finalmente revista, rinovata et approvata con gli ordini et instituti della Compagnia, dalla santa et felicissima memoria del cardinale Borromeo di S. Prassede, arcivescovo di Milano et visitatore apostolico...".

sub-title in this Regola: "Ricordi datti dalla Madre Angela alle Deputate alla custodia della Compagnia". This demonstrates that notice had been taken of the incongruity between the teaching contained in the Counsels addressed to the colonelle and the actual function of the "avvisatrici" to whom the reforming cardinal had assigned the Merician message. The new sub-title would be retained also in the 1673 and 1795 editions and again, with a slight variant, in Faino's 1672 edition: "Ricordi della benedetta Madre Angela alle persone deputate ad haver cura della Compagnia".

Like the Borromean edition of 1582, the small 1620 volume includes the Ceremonial Ordini et Ceremonie,24 but with the addition of the "Ceremonie che si servano quando le vergini della Compagnia di S. Orsola fanno il voto". It also contains Paul III's Bull (the executory form, but it is incomplete), of which the dedication "Al pio Lettore" says that "the original is to be found among the papers of the Company of Brescia in the hands of the venerable mother of the Company; it has also been copied into the book of the Constitutions of the very illustrious and very reverend Mgr Marino Giorgio, our bishop".25

The Rule reformed by Charles Borromeo did not contain the Bull of Paul III; it made reference to it though at the end of the Ceremonial: "And saying this, the entire Company moves off with the said virgins who have just been received, and who immediately enjoy the plenary Indulgences granted to our Company, as it appears in the pontifical

Bull".25b

# c) The 1672 edition

The most disconcerting editorial fact, from certain aspects, happened at Bologna in 1672; this was the publication of the

- Regola della Compagnia delle Vergini di Sant'Orsola di Brescia, la quale può servire anco ad altre città, essendo meglio espressa et ordinata, per commodo et beneficio universale. Con la Vita della Madre Angela Merici sua fondatrice di beata memoria. In Bologna, per Gio. Recaldini, 1672.

The dedicatory letter to Mgr Marino Giovanni Zorzi, bishop of

<sup>24</sup> Cf. supra, Pt.III, Ch.III, 1.c.

25b "Et dicendo questo, tutta la Compagnia si parte con le sodette vergini ricevute, le quali subito godono delle Indulgentie plenarie concesse a essa Compagnia, come appare nella Bolla pontificale".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Regola, Brescia 1620, p.4: "si trova autentico nelle scritture della Compagnia di Brescia appresso la veneranda madre della Compagnia, et è registrato anco nel libro delle Constitutioni di mons. illustrissimo et reverendissimo Marino Giorgio, vescovo nostro".

Brescia, is signed by the printer. The preface "Al pio lettore" is not signed, but we know it is by Faino.<sup>26</sup>

The aim of this new revised version was praiseworthy: to give a more systematic structure to the norms: "To put more order into the book, which was very confused, it has been divided into three parts; the chapters have been sub-divided into numbered articles for greater clarity and convenience. While keeping intact the sense of the same Rule, obscure and confused in many parts, it has been made clearer by adding, with very great care, many useful and necessary things; what was best in it has been very clearly stated; the intention of the blessed Foundress of the Company and the thoughts of her government have also been made clear, as much for the great consolation and the profit of the virgins as for the guidance and comfort of the persons who have the charge of looking after them, both in Brescia and elsewhere".<sup>27</sup>

The fact that Faino had prefixed St Charles' letter to the Regola, is proof that he had no intention of pushing to one side the Brescian text revised by the cardinal; he only wanted to give it a more systematic structure; and this seems to be further confirmed by the table of contents.

The first part contains the general disciplinary rules; the second consists of the chapters concerning government; the third presents the Ricordi, the Testamento, the Decrees of approval, Paul III's Bull without the specific details of the executory Bull, a "Constitutio" of the bishop of Brescia, Vincenzo Giustiniani, which had been printed in his time in the acts of the 1635 diocesan Synod, and an edict of Cardinal Pietro Ottoboni, ordinary of Brescia, promulgated on the occasion of the 1658 Synod, as well as some pages on the stages of the admission of members and the prayers to be recited for the general chapter of elections.

Faino openly admitted that he had added, clarified, made more explicit. But the result is far from what could be expected, because his new version of the Rule diverges, considerably, from the Borromean text and therefore, with even more reason, from the Merician one. The teaching

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> This is what emerges from the draft of the preface as well as of the whole re-shaping of the Regola. This draft is to be found in the BQ, Monasteri bresciani, E.I. 11, m.1-7, ms. The printed edition did not reproduce this draft word for word, but there is no doubt that it is derived from it.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> "Al pio lettore", Regola Brescia, Bologna 1672, p.[9]: "s'è distinto il libro, ch'era assai confuso, in tre parte per dargli meglior ordine; et i capitoli posti a numeri [cioè suddivisi in articoli numerati] per più chiarezza e facilità; e conservando illibato il senso dell'istessa Regola, in molte parti oscura e confusa, aggiongendo il lume di cose molto utili e necessarie, ricavate dalla diligenza, quello assai meglio s'è espresso e dichiarato; e dichiarata anco l'intentione della benedetta Fondatrice della Compagnia, et i sentimenti del suo governo, sì per maggior consolatione e profitto delle vergini, come per maggior indirizzo e soglievo delle persone che per officio n'hanno la cura e la vigilanza, tanto in Brescia come altrove".

of the Madre is watered down in it, muffled, fragmented as it is by constant moralising passages. The experience of government Faino had acquired over the years tended to make him suffocate the principles beneath a pile of recommendations, prescriptions, detailed reasons, all of which betray his anxiety to provide the virgins of the Company with a teaching for every situation, a reply to every query, a rule for every type of behaviour.

The "Regola della Compagnia" thus became a conglomeration of all the different elements which today would be found in a Rule, then in the Constitutions, the spiritual Directory and the Regulations.

But Faino must be given a merit which up to now we have not discovered in any of the other editors, namely that of having made the distinction between Paul III's Bull of approval addressed to the Company, and the executory Mandate addressed to the bishop of Verona and the two Brescian conservators.<sup>28</sup> Wanting to publish the Bull in the third part of the Regola with other juridical documents, he chose the text of the Bull of approval, as was right, instead of that of the executory Bull (incomplete moreover) as had been done in 1620, and as would be done in 1673 by Father Cristoni and would continue to be done right up to recent years.

Faino had the text of the Bull followed by the attestation about which we have already spoken,<sup>29</sup> concerning the existence of authentic copies of the two pontifical documents in the Archives of the Company. At the same time, and referring to the document published by him, he wrote in the preface of the Regola, "Al pio lettore": "The authentic copy of this Bull, in parchment, is to be found among the papers of this Company; it is also copied in the book of constitutions of the See of Brescia".<sup>29b</sup>

Faino submitted his work to the competent diocesan authority so that he could obtain approval to publish it. The "Reimprimatur" granted by the vicar-general of the Holy Office at Bologna proves that, in the mind of the author, as well as in the judgment of the ecclesiastical revisers, the Regola della Compagnia delle Vergini di S. Orsola di Brescia, published at Bologna by Recaldini, was continuing the life, without any break, of the Rule of Angela Merici.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 2.b.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> Cf. supra, Pt.III, Ch.I, 2.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29b</sup> "La qual Bolla si trova autentica in carta pergamena tra le scritture di questa Compagnia, et anco registrata nel libro delle costitutioni del Vescovado di Brescia...".

## d) The 1673 edition

Faino, who died in 1673, was replaced by Giovanni Maria Cristoni. The new father general of the Company, noticing the anomaly of this "reprinted" edition, hoped to counterbalance it by the publication of the - Regola della Compagnia delle Vergini di Santa Orsola di Brescia fondata dalla veneranda Madre Angela Merici bresciana da Desenzano. In Brescia, per Gio.

Battista Gromi, 1673.

Father Cristoni really believed that he was publishing "the ancient text of the Mother foundress, who had the Spirit of God". But, in reality, it was only the Regola reformed by Charles Borromeo.

We think this is an opportune place in which to give a partial account of the dedication "Al pio lettore", in which the author justified the initiative he had taken so soon after Faino's edition, and in doing so he spread the erroneous belief that it was truly a reprint of the authentic Merician Rule. This inaccuracy of Cristoni (or ignorance?) is at the root of a serious confusion which has persisted right up to our own day, and which leads astray those who are not aware of the chequered history of the Rule of Angela Merici.

"To the pious reader. You are surprised, Pious Reader, given that the Rule of the Virgins of St Ursula of Brescia was reprinted at Bologna by Gio. Recaldini on 12 November 1672, that it has been reprinted again today in Brescia, with a completely different lay-out and, in several places, with a different meaning. Listen, because I am going to tell you what has really happened. A religious and virtuous person, out of a zeal-ous desire to improve and perfect these Rules, had changed their ancient text without the consent of the Congregation, which does not want any other Rule but the one which was laid down by and originated from the heart of that great servant of God Mother Angela Merici of Desenzano, foundress of this Company, and which has been observed from 1535 to this day, with so much spiritual benefit that the whole town knows about it, because it sees, with very great consolation, the modesty and the good example of these Virgins.

"And so it came about that the Assembly of the government, when it saw this revision of the Rule of the Company of the Virgins of St Ursula and no longer recognised it as theirs, unanimously commissioned me, unworthy Father General of the Company that I am, to get it reprinted immediately, without anything new in it, keeping word for word to the ancient text of the Mother foundress who had the Spirit of God. And this I have done, without any alteration, addition or diminution either with regard to the sense, to the words or to the order, with the ex-

ception of a few liberties I have taken in some small things attributed to the hand of the chancellor Gabriel Cozzano who helped her to write it. And the Company clearly intends this one to be its Rule; and the Assembly of the government orders the Virgins to use this one and none other. And that should be enough to satisfy your curiosity".<sup>30</sup>

Compared with the text of the Regola revised by St Charles, the variants in Cristoni's text are of only minor importance.

Cristoni's reprinted Regola is followed by the ritual Ordini et Cerimonie, according to the text in Turlino's edition, but this has been expurgated of its typographical errors and the formula of the vow has been added.

Henceforward the *Testamento* and *Ricordi* will always be the revised ones, as in the Borromean Rule: one "legacy" has been omitted, one or two others have been divided in some different way. Paul III's Bull is published, in its executory form, but not the whole of it, as had happened in all the editions of the Rule with the exception of Faino's. Then follow the "Constitutio" of Bishop Giustiniani and the edict of Cardinal Ottoboni, as in Faino's Rule.

The text of this edition would be, and would continue to be considered, the "primitive", "authentic" text of the Rule of St Angela, simply touched up by St Charles Borromeo and, as such, it was to remain unchanged for nearly two centuries. It would be reprinted in 1795 under the title of

- Regola della Compagnia delle Vergini di Santa Orsola di Brescia fondata dalla Ven. Madre Angela Merici Bresciana da Desenzano, in Brescia, dalle Stampe Bendiscioli, nel 1795.

<sup>30</sup> Regola, Brescia 1673, pp.[6-7]: "Al pio lettore. Ti meravigli, Pio Lettore, che, essendosi la Regola delle Vergini di S. Orsola di Brescia ristampata in Bologna per Gio. Recaldini sotto li 12 novembre 1672, hora di nuovo si ristampi in Brescia tutta diversa nell'ordine, et in molti luoghi alterata anco ne' sensi. Senti, ch'io ti dico la cosa come veramente sta. Una persona religiosa e virtuosa, mossa da buon zelo di megliorar e perfettionar queste Regole, havea posta mano nel testo antico d'esse senza il consenso della Congregatione, che non vuole altra Regola che la prescritta e uscita dal cuore di quella gran serva di Dio la Madre Angela Merici da Desenzano, fondatrice di questa Compagnia, osservata dal 1535 fin'al giorno d'hoggi con tanto profitto di spirito, quanto è noto a tutta questa Città, che con grandissima consolatione vede la modestia e i buoni essempi di queste Vergini. Onde, veduta dalla Congregatione del governo questa riforma di Regola della Compagnia delle Vergine di S. Orsola di Brescia, non conoscendola per sua, a tutte balle ha datto commissione a me, indegno Padre Generale della Compagnia, che debba subito ristamparle senza alcuna novità, insistendo puntualmente al testo antico della Madre institutrice che haveva lo Spirito di Dio. E così ho fatto senza alteratione, aggiunta o diminutione alcuna né de' sensi, né di parole, né d'ordine; salvo se non mi fossi preso qualche libertà in cosarelle proprie della mano del cancelliero Gabriel Cozzano che l'aiutava a scrivere. E questa intende la Compagnia che sia la sua Regola, e la Congregatione del governo comanda che le Vergini si servano di questa e non d'altra. E tanto basti per sodisfar alla tua curiosità".

There was yet another reprint of this Rule in Book III of Salvatori's *Vita*<sup>31</sup>; this, however, was not a separate edition but a text published as a document.

The author writes: "I have already promised in Ch.X of Book I to give in detail here the Rule prescribed by the Holy Foundress for her spiritual daughters; but at the same time I gave warning that I had not been able to find either the original or an authenticated copy of it; hence I have simply copied the one which had only suffered a slight alteration, everything in it of importance or of substance in the prescriptions of the holy Mother having been retained. Such in truth is the text which I am presenting here and to which the signed attestation by the author of the edition from which I have drawn it will bear witness. It is the 1673 edition, made by P. Gio. Maria Cristoni, spiritual director of the Ursulines of Brescia at that time; and this is the notice that he gives at the beginning of his edition: You are surprised, Pious Reader ...".32

From this Regola, Salvatori had extrapolated the Ricordi (which made up Ch.21); he had put them into a separate section, as a document, on account of their spiritual wealth. And he had published their text, taking it from the manuscript codex which had been reproduced in the APC: "There also exist a number of copies of this Writing of the Saint; but as I have done for the Testamento, I have referred, for these Ricordi, to the above-mentioned edition of the Summary. In the edition of the Rule which I give in n.1, these Ricordi come after Ch.XX delle Avvisatrici; I, however, am placing them here, in a separate section, because on the one hand this is how they are reported in the Summary presented to the Sacred Congregation of Rites, and because on the other they form a separate corpus of instruction, well suited to anyone who has the direction of souls consecrated to God".33

Before the Ricordi, Salvatori had reproduced the Testamento: "Here

adattissimo a chiunque ha direzione di anime consacrate a Dio".

<sup>31</sup> SALVATORI, Vita, op. cit., pp.161-198. Cf. supra, Pt.III, Ch.III, 2.c.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> Ibid., p.161: "Promisi già, nel cap.X del libro I, di dare qui per disteso le Regole prescritte dalla Santa Fondatrice alle sue figliuole spirituali; ma avvertii insieme non essermi riuscito di trovarne l'originale, né copia autentica; onde m'impegnai solo a dar copia di quelle che non aveano sofferta se non se una piccolissima alterazione, salvo il più ed il sostanziale del prescritto dalla S. Madre. Che tale veramente sia la copia qui da me sottoposta, fede ne farà l'infrascritta protesa dell'autore di quella edizione d'onde le ho tratte. L'edizione è del 1673, fatta dal P. Gio. Maria Cristoni, direttore spirituale delle Orsoline di Brescia in que' tempi; e questo è l'Avviso che premette alla sua edizione: Ti meravigli, Pio Lettore..."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> Ibid., p.206: "Anche di questo Scritto della Santa molte copie si trovano; ma, come ho fatto del Testamento, così di questi Ricordi mi sono attenuto all'edizione del Sommario accennato di sopra. Questi Ricordi nella edizione delle Regole da me riportata nel n.1, vengono dopo il cap.XX delle Avvisatrici; ma io li pongo qui, in un luogo a parte, sì perché in questo modo sono riportati nel Sommario esibito alla Sacra Congregazione de' Riti, sì perché formano un corpo d'istruzione a parte, e

is the *Testamento* which I promised my readers in Ch.IX of Book II. Numerous copies of it exist, both in manuscript and in print. As for the one which I am giving, I am keeping to the original written by Gabriele Cozzano under the dictation of the Saint, legally recognised and produced at the Process, folio 1377, and presented to the Sacred Congregation of Rites in the Summary of the Position on the Virtues".<sup>34</sup>

The order adopted by Salvatori for these two texts would lead Elisabetta Girelli to write that the Ricordi are "an appendix" to the Testa-

mento.35

## e) The Verzeri-Girelli Rule

An extremely interesting and very relevant study today would be to go through all the events relating to the history of the Company of St Ursula in the city and diocese of Brescia, from the time of the Napole-

onic suppression to its restoration in 1866.

In 1852, on the occasion of the pastoral visit of the church of St Afra at Brescia, carried out by Bishop Girolamo Verzeri, the parish priest Giuseppe Garbottini wrote out for him a few notes about the situation in the parish. Among them we read: "In this church the following societies or Companies have been established: I. of the Blessed Sacrament; II. of the Holy Martyrs; III. of the Sacred Heart of Jesus; IV. of St Angela Merici; all presided over by the Parish Priest and by the Vestry Council". And, indicating the other churches of the parish, he drew attention to: "Small chapel adjoining the parish cemetery which is used as an oratory on feast-days by young girls of the same parish and which is named after the Immaculate Virgin Mary and St Angela Merici. The oratory is directed by the Parish Priest, assisted by the reverend curate Giacomo Pochetti".36

It is clear that the title of St Angela had been given to a "Company" and to the feminine oratory in just homage to the renowned pa-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> Ibid., p.198: "Ecco il *Testamento*, che promisi a' miei lettori nel capo IX del libro II. Di questo molte copie se ne trovano manoscritte e stampate. Io, nel riportarlo, mi attengo all'originale scritto da Gabriele Cozzano sotto la dettatura della Santa, legalmente riconosciuto e compulsato in Processo foglio 1377, ed esibito alla Sacra Congregazione de' Riti nel Sommario della Posizione sulle Virtù".

<sup>35</sup> E. GIRELLI, Vita, op. cit., p.146.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> AV, Visite Pastorali Verzeri, a.1852, fascic.VII. Chiesa di S. Afra e sussidiarie: "In questa chiesa vi sono erette le seguenti società o Compagnie: I. del SS. Sacramento; II. dei SS. Martiri; III. del Sacro Cuore di Gesù; IV. di Sant'Angela Merici, tutte presiedute dal Parroco e dalla locale Fabbriceria"... "Chiesetta attigua al cimitero della parrocchia, che serve per l'oratorio festivo delle fanciulle della parrocchia istessa sotto l'invocazione di Maria Vergine Immacolata e di S. Angela Merici. L'oratorio è diretto dal Parroco, assistito dal R. curato Giacomo Pochetti".

rishioner. But there is nothing to prevent one from thinking that some surviving members of the former Company of St Ursula may also have

come together there at the beginning.

The archives of this same parish church of St Afra contain a documentation which, as far as we can tell, has scarcely been touched. We discovered there, inter alia, a Registro delle divote di S. Angela incomincia l'anno 1824, and another of Divoti ascritti a S. Angela Merici (begun already in 1816).<sup>37</sup> We saw written there, in 1838, the name of an Elena Girelli: would this be perhaps the "aunt Elena" of Maddalena and Elisabetta? We cannot say.

Did the Napoleonic suppression completely wipe out the Company or had it only forced it to go underground? Were there any signs of simple survival anywhere or any attempts to bring the Merician ideal to life again either in its traditional structures or in new forms? Some efforts had probably been made, either as a spontaneous movement outside any organised cadres or as authorised interventions aimed at preventing, with the enforced suppression of the Institute, the actual dispersal of its members and the loss of its spiritual values.

When Bishop Girolamo Verzeri took over the government of the diocese of Brescia, he learnt that a group of secular Ursulines had come together as a community at Salò, still keeping the Rule of the Company. Therefore he thought it was necessary "alias regulas superaddere pro vita earumdem comuni iuvanda ac moderanda". He did this and, in 1861, was able to write in his report to Rome: "Dei ope peractum esse gaudeo". 38

Later, when the Girelli sisters wanted to organise a "pious union" of consecrated virgins living in the world, we would find Bishop Verzeri again, full of pastoral solicitude, clearsighted and, notwithstanding the complexity of the actual situation, determined to restore to life the Company of St Ursula.

<sup>38</sup> Relazione del 30 settembre 1853, ASV, Brixien, S. Congr. Concilii, Relationes 146B, f.303v. Relazione del 26 dicembre 1861, ibid., f.328v. The title of the additions is: Regolamento per le Vergini che vivono in comunità sotto gli auspici e la Regola di Sant' Angela Merici e portano titolo di Orsoline in aggiunta e spiegazione alle Regole di detta Santa imposto da Monsignore Girolamo Verzeri Vescovo di Brescia

alle Orsoline di Salò, Salò, Tip. Eredi Capra, 1854.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> Among other documents worthy of note, we draw attention to the notarial act which attests the restitution of a tibia of St Angela by the Episcopal Curia. This tibia had been exposed for public veneration in 1837, during a commemorative triduum marking the third centenary of the foundation (erroneous date as we have already explained); it had then been immediately replaced among the relics of the bishopric. Handed back on 14 January 1847, the tibia was placed in the Saint's tomb. The document is kept in the section entitled "Visita Vescovile ed Atti della Venerabile Curia".

## The Daughters of Mary Immaculate

On 5 April 1864 – it is Paolo Guerrini who gives us this information based on sound documentary evidence<sup>39</sup> – a pious union actually came into being at Brescia, gathered round Maddalena and Elisabetta Girelli; this was the "Pia Unione delle Figlie di Maria Immacolata sotto la protezione di S. Orsola e di S. Angela Merici". Two years later, the bishop would advise them to adopt what he thought was the Rule of St Angela.

A short excursus about this Pious Union is necessary here. Let us recall first of all a connection of a historical nature: on 8 December 1854, Pius IX had proclaimed "ex cathedra", by the Bull "Ineffabilis", the dogma of the Immaculate Conception; four years later, the apparitions at Lourdes had given a fresh impetus to the devotional aspect of this dogma. Religious congregations and pious associations under the title of Mary Immaculate sprang up everywhere.

One of these came into being at Mornese, in the diocese of Acqui (Piedmont). This was the "Pia Unione delle Figlie di Maria Immacolata" founded by the young Angela Maccagno for those girls who wanted to commit themselves to living a life of perpetual chastity while remaining in the world. It was said afterwards that neither Angela Maccagno nor the person who was responsible for drawing up the Rule, knew about the Company of St Ursula, and yet they had set up an institution similar in every way. In reality, though, the similarity was only superficial, limited to the fact that a rule of life as an association was offered to young women consecrated in a secular structure. But in the meantime the misunderstanding would arise that the "Pious Union" was the Company of St Ursula restored. It was even written that "in its substance, and in general even in its secondary points, it was as one with the celebrated Company of St Ursula".40

Whence the title of "Nuove Orsoline" given in a general way to the members of the Pia Unione delle Figlie di Maria Immacolata. And yet! There may have been some similarity in the practical prescriptions, but Angela Merici had dictated the Rule of the Company of St Ursula under the impulse of the Holy Spirit and her interior attitude had impregnated that text with a very distinctive spirituality.

<sup>39</sup> GUERRINI, La rinascita e la diffusione della Compagnia nei tempi moderni, in S. Angela, op. cit., pp. 385-403.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>40</sup> [GIUSEPPE FRASSINETTI], Regola della Pia unione delle Nuove Orsoline figlie di S. Maria Immacolata sotto la protezione di S. Orsola e di S. Angela Merici, terza edizione, Genova, Libreria di Gio. Passi-Como, 1864, p.8; the "Nuova edizione" of 1909, printed at Rome at the Tipografia Poliglotta Vaticana, has the name of the author on the frontispiece, while the first editions were anonymous.

Giuseppe Frassinetti, the Genoese priest who had written the Rules of the Association of Mary Immaculate, said openly that the new institution was identical with the old one;<sup>41</sup> then he spoke of a renewal of the Pious Union, "to which something of the Company of St Ursula has been added, so that the new institution may identify itself even more with the old one and, so to speak, blend completely with it. It will be a good thing, therefore, to draw up again the Rule of the daughters of Holy Mary Immaculate, to make it more comprehensive and more explicit, so that it may be of more help in the development of their spirit, to add to it also as much as possible of the characteristics of the Company of St Ursula and, even more, to give this name to the daughters themselves ...".<sup>42</sup>

In spite of a certain confusion regarding the ideas and objectives, the new Rule spread rapidly.

The bishop of Novara, Giacomo Filippo, a member of the marquis Gentile family, invited Mgr Verzeri to support him and other bishops in "a request to the Holy Father for apostolic approval, given that what is being requested now is in substance only a simple confirmation of the primitive Rule already approved, established by St Angela Merici for the Christian education of young girls". <sup>42b</sup> And he sent him the text of the petition to sign. <sup>43</sup>

Whoever wants to study in depth the rebirth of the Company at Brescia will probably come across even more documents. We are only giving here what seems necessary to us for the presentation of the Rule

which came to be adopted.

Verzeri replied to Gentile: "... I cannot conceal from Your Excellency a difficulty which I have already met in my diocese. There are many who view with an unfavourable eye any change whatsoever to the Rule of St Angela, approved with apostolic authority by the glorious St Charles Borromeo; and since it is a question of restoring the secular Ursulines, these people would like to see the institution of their

<sup>42b</sup> "insieme con altri vescovi una dimanda al Santo Padre per l'apostolica approvazione, non essendo in sostanza ciò che ora si domanderebbe, se non una conferma della primitiva Regola già appro-

vata e stabilita da Sant'Angela Merici per l'educazione cristiana delle zitelle".

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p.15.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p.16: "aggiuntovi alcun che della Compagnia di Sant'Orsola, affinché la novella istituzione sempre maggiormente s'identifichi e, a così dire, si converta e confondasi coll'antica. Sarà dunque bene redigere nuovamente la Regola delle figlie di S. Maria Immacolata, renderla più estesa e spiegata, perché meglio giovi alla coltura del loro spirito; aggiungervi ancora quanto si può dei particolari della Compagnia di Sant'Orsola e anzi le figlie stesse appellare da questo nome...".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup> AV, Carte riservate 1864, lettera del Vescovo Gentile al Verzeri, datata 5 agosto 1864, ora Religiosi, busta 27.

saintly compatriot restored in all its integrity. However, since the aim is identical, and the Rules are also substantially the same, I have arranged that certain of my priests, committed to the education of young girls, take steps to get the new institution started. And this they have done; and although it is not yet very widespread, it has established itself in this city. But they have made me realise the need to simplify the printed Rules, a copy of which Your Excellency has sent me. And they have even had a résumé of them presented for me to approve, which I have not yet done, as I want to ascertain first the attitude of the other Bishops towards the matter and their intentions. I am taking the liberty of sending Your Excellency a copy of the aforementioned résumé, begging you to kindly let me know your holy opinion about it".44

We did not try to find out if, as a result, the bishop of Novara had expressed any views on the stand taken by Verzeri; but we know that the latter did not change his position in any way. On the contrary, he re-

stored to life the Company of St Ursula.

### The Pious Union at Brescia

We must return to the pages of Guerrini, where he reports an account given by Annetta Luchini, one of the first companions of the Girelli sisters, "on the 25th anniversary of the beginnings of the Company" (1891).<sup>45</sup> On 5 April 1864, Maddalena Girelli had read out to the six companions who surrounded her "the Rules written by her", thereby giving birth to the Pious Union of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate at Brescia. "In the space of a few days, the Pious Union saw its numbers increased by several young girls truly desiring to be Daughters of Mary Immaculate ...".<sup>46</sup>

The account of Annetta Luchini, an eye-witness who would later

45 GUERRINI, La rinascita quoted in S. Angela, op. cit., pp.392-398.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>44</sup> Ibid., Minute of the letter of 30 August 1864 to the bishop of Novara: "... non posso dissimulare a V.E una difficoltà che ho già incontrato in questa mia diocesi. Parecchi non fanno buon viso ad una modificazione qualunque delle Regole di Sant'Angela, approvate con autorità apostolica dal glorioso San Carlo Borromeo, e, trattandosi di ripristinare le Orsoline nel secolo, vorrebbero ristabilita nella sua integrità la istituzione della Santa loro concittadina. Siccome però non solamente è identico lo scopo, ma eziandio le Regole sono nella sostanza le stesse, ho fatto sì che alcuni del mio clero addetti alla coltura della gioventù femminile, facessero prova d'attivare la nuova istituzione. E lo hanno fatto; e, sebbene non molto estesa, sussiste in questa città. Ma mi fecero sentire il bisogno de semplificare le Regole stampate di cui V.E. mi ha trasmesso un esemplare. Anzi, mi fecero presentare un ristretto di esse perché le approvassi. Il che finora non ho fatto, amando di prima conoscere a che riuscivano le pratiche degli altri Vescovi in argomento, e le loro intenzioni. Mi prendo la libertà di inviare a V.E. un esemplare del predetto compendio, con preghiera che me ne dia il suo sacro parere".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p.393: "In pochi giorni la Pia Unione si trovò cresciuta di varie giovani, desiderose di essere veramente Figlie di Maria Immacolata...".

become vice-superior of the Company, helps us to understand the evolution which this Brescian group had to undergo.

From "Pious Union" to "Company"

"Almost two years thus passed, with the members of the Union carrying out works of piety and mercy with great joy and generosity of heart, finding themselves stronger for being united together in this way. The Mother Superior then thought of presenting a humble request to Mgr Verzeri that the Pious Union should be approved and canonically established. The bishop, consulted regarding this matter, indicated that he would rather see the primitive Rule of St Angela Merici adopted, the one dictated, under divine inspiration, for those Virgins who ardently desired to remain such in the midst of the world, because he found the same aspirations and similar duties in the Rules outlined by Maddalena Girelli.

"The superior, Maddalena Girelli, then made a first and solemn act of submission and obedience to the truly paternal counsels and wishes of the bishop. She gathered together the virgins, ordered the Rules which she had written to be burnt, and began with great alacrity of heart to surmount the difficulties to be met with in compiling a faithful copy of the primitive Rule of St Angela Merici, which had been reprinted at different times and in different places with a number of notable changes, and in making the slight modifications which the changed circumstances in social life rendered necessary".<sup>47</sup>

To compile a "faithful copy of the primitive Rule of St Angela Merici" was an arduous and demanding undertaking, as the following account will show. It seems reasonable to suppose that the Girelli sisters examined two texts in particular: the one which Cristoni had published in 1673, and the one which Salvatori had included in his *Vita* in 1807, which differed very little from the former.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup> Ibid., p.394: "Passarono così due anni esercitandosi le consorelle in opere di pietà e misericordia con grande giubilo e larghezza di cuore, trovandosi più forti così tutte unite; quando la Madre Superiora pensò di porgere umile domanda a mons. Verzeri perché la Pia Unione venisse approvata, e stabilita canonicamente. Il vescovo, interpellato riguardo a questo, mostrò desiderio che si avesse ad abbracciare addirittura la Regola primitiva di S. Angela Merici, dettata, per ispirazione divina, per quelle Vergini che bramavano conservarsi tali in mezzo al mondo, trovando egli le stesse aspirazioni, consimili doveri, nelle Regole che la Girelli aveva tracciate. Un primo e solenne tratto di sommessione ed obbedienza ai consigli e desideri veramente paterni di mons. Vescovo porse la superiora Maddalena Girelli. Radunò le vergini, comandò di abbrucciare le Regole scritte da lei, e si mise con alacrità di cuore a superare le difficoltà che s'incontrarono nel compilare una copia fedele della Regola primitiva di S. Angela Merici, che in vari tempi e luoghi era stata ristampata ma con notabili alterazioni, e farle quelle lievi modificazioni che fossero necessarie per le mutate circostanze della vita sociale".

When Maddalena and Elisabetta Girelli examined the first text, they read in the introduction "Al pio lettore" that it was the "ancient text of the Mother foundress, who had the Spirit of God", the text reprinted "without any alteration, addition or diminution"; they believed therefore that they really had the authentic text of St Angela in their possession and rejoiced over it: "Blessed are we, that this spiritual treasure has reached us intact!". 48

Elisabetta's enthusiasm echoed the conviction with which Cristoni claimed the priority for the Borromean Rule, as if it really was the primitive Rule, in other words the Rule dictated by the Foundress.

The two sisters must have been even more convinced by the fact that Salvatori also had published the same text, affirming that it was the one with only a very small alteration.<sup>49</sup>

But Salvatori had noticed that Chapter 11 could not be attributed to Angela, since it referred to the recommendation of the Council of Trent to ordinaries about taking care of the consecrated life. The author had pointed out that it must be an interpolation.

The Girelli sisters came across this remark of Salvatori and, with the intention of restoring the original Merician text, they omitted the chapter. With it, though, disappeared the passage which would have given their real meaning to the following two chapters, those relating to the "Father" of the Company and to his "Substitute". As a result, the creation of these two statutory figures of Tridentine origin finished by being attributed to the Foundress like the rest of the Rule. This inconsistency escaped the attention of the Girelli sisters; it would be even less obvious later on to those who knew the Rule without having experienced this transitional period. On the other hand, the two sisters lacked the basic knowledge of historical criticism so necessary for tackling the work of reconstructing a text scientifically.<sup>50</sup>

But this in no way detracts from the spiritual importance and fecundity of their work, nor does it undermine in any way our esteem for their moral rectitude and good faith.

On the contrary, we do not want to pass over in silence a certain page of Elisabetta, charged with meaning, indicative of an interior attitude of fi-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>48</sup> GIRELLI, *Vita, op. cit.*, p.221: "Noi felici, a cui pervenne intemerato questo spirituale tesoro!".

<sup>49</sup> SALVATORI, *Vita, op. cit.*, p.162 and p.173.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>50</sup> To realise this, it suffices to read pages 126-128 of the *Vita* in question (3rd edition, 1903), and especially pages 74-75 of the *Compendio della Vita di S. Angela Merici* per E. GIRELLI, Brescia, tipografia e libreria editrice Queriniana, 1907. Angela's election as mother, minister and treasurer (18 March 1537) is presented here with several inaccuracies. We have to say the same regarding Cozzano, who is supposed to have given an account of the Rule at the process of beatification, as is stated on p.122 of the *Vita* and on p.72 of the *Compendio*.

delity and of filial reverence vis-à-vis the *Regola*: "There is nothing small or of little importance in a Rule *divinely ordained*. Each word, each syllable is highly significant when it issues from the mouth of the saints. God knows how many tears, how many prayers and penances every piece of advice, every counsel left to us in the Rule will have cost our Holy Foundress, and do we think perhaps, on the slightest pretext, that it is permissible to break it? ... May this never happen. Let us rather put all our effort into doing what we can to preserve intact this sacred deposit which has been given to us from Heaven; and by the saintliness of our lives, let us make it known to everyone that it is not in vain that our Company professes the primitive Rule of St Angela Merici". 506

Elisabetta's sense of balance, her right-mindedness and sound doctrine are to be admired when she states: "It is true that this Rule is not binding on us under pain of sin", but she had not hesitated to say, echoing Angela's words in the "prologue": "... let us remember, though, that we cannot break it without grave risk". 51

Such being the case, the Girelli sisters reduced to the minimum their own comments on the text which they had in hand, namely the one "of St Charles" edited by Cristoni.

Salvatori likewise had extracted the *Ricordi* from the context of the *Regola*, which helped to make the latter lighter and in the meantime enabled the former to regain what was, from all the evidence, their rightful independent position. The Girelli sisters also followed him in this.

# The Rule of the Company

Thus was born the

– Regola della Compagnia di Sant'Orsola dettata da S. Angela Merici, che una Pia Unione di Vergini professa sotto il titolo e protezione di Maria SS. Immacolata, Brescia, tip. Vescovile dell'Istituto in S. Barnaba, 1866.<sup>52</sup>

ogni sillaba ha un gran peso, allorché esce dalla bocca dei santi. Dio sa quante lacrime, quante orazioni e penitenze sarà costato alla nostra Santa Fondatrice ogni consiglio e ricordo a noi lasciato nella Regola, e noi forse per un pretesto da nulla ci faremo lecito di violarla?... Non sia mai. Anzi, invece, colla nostra diligenza diamo opera efficace a conservare intatto questo sacro deposito quale ci fu donato dal Cielo, e colla santità della vita facciamo conoscere a tutti che, non indarno, questa nostra Compagnia professa la primitiva Regola di sant'Angela Merici".

ELISABETTA GIRELLI, Esposizione pratica della Regola di S. Angela Merici per uso delle Vergini della Compagnia, Brescia, Tip. Vesc. del Pio Istituto, 1873, p.13 and p.12. We are taking these lines from the 1873 edition because we do not have the Esposizione pratica della Regola di S. Angela Merici per uso delle vergini della Compagnia, Brescia, Tip. Vesc. del Pio Istituto, 1867. "È vero che questa Regola non ci obbliga sotto pena di verun peccato" ... "ma ricordiamoci bene, che non si può violare senza gravissimo pericolo".

<sup>52</sup> There is a copy of this in the Biblioteca Statale of Cremona, reg.3.B.14.

Its foundation naturally remained the Borromean Rule re-edited in 1673; the Girelli sisters touched up the linguistic style, omitted the outmoded rules, simplified the heavy, complicated structures. Omissions, simplifications and amendments relating to the contents were pointed out and explanations given in thirteen notes placed in an appendix to the Rule.

Thus, for example, the chapters on government were reduced from 17 to 10, owing to the reduction of the members of the government. This is how the modifications which were made are presented: "Having dropped, in effect, the numerous titles of the various offices which had been established at the time of the Saint [we know that they were really added later], the following are thought to be necessary: the Director, his Substitute, the Mother superior, her Vicar, a Mistress for the spiritual education of the young in probation, and as many Assistants as are required for the needs of the Company ..." (annotation n.7). 52b

After the text of the *Regola*, from page 59 onwards, the Girelli sisters placed that of the *Testamento*, taken from Salvatori's *Vita*: "... drawn from the original written by Gabriele Cozzano under the dictation of the Saint, legally recognised and produced at the process and presented to the Sacred Congregation of Rites in the Summary of the Position on the Virtues" (as Salvatori himself had stated), but they added the following: "N.B. In this document, as in the *Ricordi* which follow, the spelling has been corrected and also some phrases which are now out of date, so as to make it more intelligible".<sup>52c</sup>

In spite of these variants, the text of the two Merician Writings, *Testamento* and *Ricordi*, is vastly superior to those of Cristoni and Gondi; and the *Ricordi* are much more faithful to the original than those of the Rule reformed by St Charles, because the touching-up carried out by the Girelli

sisters was purely of a linguistic nature.

The same direct source which the Girelli sisters used for the Merician Writings, in other words Salvatori, also provided the text of some of the Decrees issued in the course of the processes of canonisation. Elisabetta, in her turn, inserted them in her *Vita di Sant' Angela*.

The Regola was printed with the Decree of Bishop Verzeri who ap-

52c "... cavato dall'originale scritto da Gabriele Cozzano sotto la dettatura della Santa, legalmente riconosciuto e compulsato in processo ed esibito alla Sacra Congregazione dei Riti nel Sommario della Posizione sulle Virtù" ... "N.B. Anche in questo documento, come nei seguenti Ricordi, si è corretta

l'ortografia ed alcune frasi disusate per renderlo più intelligibile".

<sup>\*\*</sup>S2b "lasciati i molteplici titoli dei vari uffici, che ai tempi della Santa erano stabiliti, si riterrebbero necessari: il Direttore, un suo Sostituto, la Madre superiora, la sua Vicaria, una Maestra per l'educazione spirituale delle giovani che si tengono in prova, e tante Assistenti quante ne richiegga il bisogno della Compagnia...".

proved the variants in it as compared with Cristoni's text, still looked upon as being the original. This Decree, dated 13 June 1866, is on pages 93-96, with the title: "Decreto di erezione canonica della Compagnia dell'Immacolata colla Regola pura di S. Angela Merici dato da S.E. Ill.ma mons. Girolamo Verzeri vescovo di Brescia".

In the 1962 edition of the Verzeri-Girelli Rule, the title of the Decree was modified as follows: "Decreto di erezione canonica della Compagnia dell'Immacolata data da Sua Ecc.za Rev.ma mons. Girolamo Verzeri vescovo di Brescia".<sup>53</sup>

The original of this Decree is to be found in the Episcopal Archives of Brescia; it carries at the top a note in different handwriting: "Erezione della Confraternita di S. Orsola".<sup>54</sup>

Referring to the *Regola* and to the amendments made, Verzeri expressed himself thus: "By virtue of our ordinary authority, we declare by this Decree that the additions and modifications which have been proposed are right for their purpose; and in every best way possible, we recognise, approve and, if it is necessary, establish anew in our City and Diocese the Confraternity or Company founded by the blessed St Angela Merici, whose Company is beginning in our own time under the title and patronage of Holy Mary Immaculate ...".<sup>54b</sup>

Without wanting to give undue weight to the words, we notice that the title of the 1866 Rule and the one conferred on the Company by the Decree draw attention to one undeniable fact: the 110 virgins who had joined the Pious Union of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate<sup>55</sup> had embraced a form of life with a distinctive Marian orientation. It may have been expedient that the transition to the Merician institution should take place gradually, without conflicts. But, viewed from a distance, the situation suggests a certain ambiguity, at least with regard to the expression, if not the intention. Bishop Verzeri had a definite plan in mind: to bring back to life the Company of St Ursula; the members – as asserted by Annetta Luchini – desired "to be truly daughters of Mary Immaculate". Was it tolerance and prudence on the part of the bishop, or was it recognition and acceptance of a particular devotion to the Immaculate Virgin, superimposed on the Merician spirituality?

<sup>53</sup> Regola della Compagnia di S. Orsola dettata di S. Angela Merici, Brescia, Scuola tipografica Opera Pavoniana, 1962.

<sup>54</sup> AV, Religiosi, busta 27; già Cancelleria, n.848.

<sup>54</sup>b "con questo Decreto di ordinaria nostra autorità dichiariamo adatte allo scopo le aggiunte e modificazioni che ci sono state proposte; ed in ogni miglior maniera a noi possibile riconosciamo, approviamo, e se è d'uopo, di nuovo instituiamo nella nostra Città e Diocesi la Confraternita o Compagnia fondata dalla benedetta sant'Angela Merici, quale è ora iniziata sotto il titolo ed il patrocinio di Maria SS. Immacolata...".

<sup>55</sup> GUERRINI, La rinascita, quoted in S. Angela, op. cit., p.395.

The frontispiece of the first edition of the Rule of the Company, with the sub-title "professed by a Pious Union of Virgins under the title and protection of Holy Mary Immaculate" was kept in the editions which followed in 1888 and 1900; it was no longer to be found in the 1921 edition.<sup>56</sup>

On the other hand (still according to the account of Annetta Luchini), at the time of the first ceremony of profession on 29 July 1866, "after the singing of the *Veni Creator Spiritus*, the Bishop told his secretary to read out the Brief of Paul III confirming the Institute of St Angela and the episcopal decree of canonical erection". <sup>56b</sup> In addition, Paul III's Bull – in its incomplete executory form – was published in the *Regola*, from the time of its first edition. <sup>57</sup> Bishop Verzeri thus drew attention to the fact that the recently established Company was really the one which had been founded by Angela Merici and approved by Paul III; at the same time, in his Decree he invited them to the "osservanza pura della Regola della S. Fondatrice". The annotations modifying it were simply aimed at trying to facilitate putting the Rule into practice according to the criteria of "aggiornamento" – an up-dating function which today is entrusted to the Constitutions.

Sending his report to Rome, the bishop of Brescia was able to write: "Sane in tot tantisque quibus undique premor malis, spei et solatio mihi est nuper excitata in urbe et nonnullis pagis pia sodalitas a Sancta Ursula nuncupata; nempe Virginum quae sub patrocinio et regula Sanctae Angelae Merici in saeculo degentes, propriae et muliebris iuventutis sanctificationi student, et Christi bonus odor sunt universae Dioecesi".<sup>58</sup>

Even so, a certain malaise, or at least a certain hesitation crept into a passage of the Decree of approval: "With great joy of heart, We have seen some virgins from various walks of life join together with the pious design of restoring to life, under the title and patronage of Holy Mary Immaculate, the Company founded by St Angela Merici, with the pure observance of the Rule of the Holy Foundress, apart from a few simple additions, and some modifications contained in thirteen annotations, so as to adapt the observance of the Rule to the present conditions of civil society ...". 586

"con vero giubilo del nostro cuore, Noi abbiamo veduto alcune vergini di diversa condizione as-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>56</sup> Regola della Compagnia di S. Orsola dettata da S. Angela Merici, Brescia, Scuola Tipografica Figli di Maria Immacolata, 1921.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>566</sup> "dopo il canto del *Veni Creator Spiritus*, il Vescovo ordinò al suo segretario di leggere il Breve di Paolo III in conferma dell'Istituto di S. Angela, ed il decreto vescovile di erezione canonica".

Regola, Brescia 1866, pp.97-102.
 Report of 3 June 1867, ASV, Brixien, S. Congr. Concilii, Relationes 146 B, f.363v. His successor, Giacomo Maria Corna Pellegrini, said the same thing when, on 13 November 1891, he informed Rome about the presence in the diocese of three thousand virgins of the Company, "quae in saeculo more religioso viventes, in suis familis sunt veluti bonus odor Christi". Ibid., f.451v. In 1916, the members of the Company would number 2700, ASV, S. Congr. Concist. Relationes 141, Brixien, Relatio quinquennalis Dioeceseos Brixiae, 1916, p.4.

Even in the Rule itself and in the ceremonial accompanying it, certain concessions to the desires of the virgins were not omitted. Thus, for example, in the articles of the Rule on "the manner prescribed for the admission of the virgins to the three steps of the Company", it is laid down that at the "clothing" a medal will be be distributed "which will carry on one side the image of Holy Mary Immaculate under whose title and protection the Company has been placed, and on the other side, that of St Angela our Foundress".59

In the ceremonial, we notice that the rite of admission into the "novitiate" has a distinctive Marian tone; but then, further on, at the formula of profession of the vow, the phrase "our glorious protectress St Angela Merici" is inserted.60 This is perhaps the most serious misunderstanding (if that is what we want to call it) of all: Angela described as

"protectress" instead of as "foundress".

Bishop Verzeri died in 1883, in the tranquil certainty that the "pure" Rule of the Foundress had once again been brought into force. In his own mind, there could only be room for one Rule for the virgins of the secular Company of Brescia, and that was the primitive Rule dictated by the Madre herself.

With the greatest respect for this intention, and victim himself of the misunderstanding which had befallen Verzeri in mistaking Cristoni's Rule for the authentic Merician Rule, Leo XIII, in his Brief of 12 July 1901, exhorted the virgins "ut in inceptis insistant, neque unquam a primaeva Regula deflectant, quam ipsa Sancta Angela tradidit, illique piae Unioni veluti testamento reliquit, omnibus et singulis filiabus Sanctae Angelae Mericiae actu existentibus...".

The 1921 edition of the Regola carried the whole text of the Brief under the heading "Pontifical Brief of praise and confirmation of the Company of St Ursula according to its Primitive institution given on 12 July 1901". The Italian translation then followed; in this way the virgins of the Company could meditate on the words of the Pope which

sociarsi nel pio disegno di risuscitare sotto il titolo e il patrocinio di Maria SS. Immacolata la Compagnia fondata da sant'Angela Merici coll'osservanza pura della Regola della Santa Fondatrice, salvo alcune lievi aggiunte, e modificazioni esposte in tredici annotazioni, affine di accomodarne l'osservanza alle attuali condizioni della civile società..."

<sup>59</sup> Decreto, Regola, Brescia 1866, p.95; Brescia 1921, p.77. The articles quoted are respectively on p.51 and p.42. "... che dall'un lato porti l'immagine di Maria SS. Immacolata, sotto il cui titolo e

protezione è posta la Compagnia; e dall'altro quella di sant'Angela nostra Fondatrice".

<sup>60</sup> Regola, Brescia 1866, pp.103-104 and pp.110-111. Cristoni's Regola (1673) and its Brescian reprint (1795) contained this same vow formula and did not make any reference to Angela. And yet in 1795 Angela had already been beatified, and the Decree for her canonisation had already been promulgated (cf. supra, Pt.III, Ch.IV, 2.c and 3.b). The expression "Angela protettrice", introduced in the 1st edition of the Verzeri-Girelli Rule, would reappear unchanged in its successive editions.

struck a warning note: "We exhort these same virgins to remain faithful in the good undertaken and to never stray away from the primitive Rule given by St Angela herself and bequeathed by her as a testament to the Pious Union, to each and every one of the present daughters of St Angela Merici who, if they observe the whole of the Rule approved, as we have said above, by the Pontiff Paul III, and recently restored in its primitive form by Bishop Girolamo Verzeri, are carrying out a meritorious work ...". 61

Even more severe, the Synodal Constitutions of 1889 added: "We absolutely forbid anyone to make the slightest change, or to reform in any way whatsoever the Rules of this Company, already approved by the Church; and we recommend that they be kept and preserved perfectly, such as they were dictated at the beginning. Should the contrary be the case, we do not approve this Congregation, either as Society of St Angela or as Society newly-founded. Indeed, taking immediate effect, we consider it to be non-existent, and we order that it should be considered as such unless it returns immediately to the true Rule".62

But which was the "Regola vera" which Angela Merici herself had left to the Company of St Ursula to be observed "with the utmost diligence", as is said in the last Legacy?

It would be necessary to wait until about 1930, in other words until the discovery of the *Secondo Libro Generale* by Cecylja Łubieńska and Paolo Guerrini, to become aware of one of the oldest texts of the primitive Rule of the Company; in 1932, the discovery of Turlino's edition would corroborate the first.

Guerrini made the Regola known in Italy by publishing it, without any scientific aim in mind, in the "Miscellanea" which commemorated the fourth centenary of the foundation of the Company. 63

The war made these discoveries fall into oblivion, and it was all the

63 GUERRINI, La Compagnia, in S. Angela, op. cit., pp.91-101.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>61</sup> Regola, Brescia 1921, pp.95 and 98. "esortiamo le medesime vergini a rimanere costanti nel bene intrapreso e a non scostarsi mai dalla Regola primitiva, data dalla stessa S. Angela e da lei come testamento lasciata all Pia Unione, a tutte ed a ciascuna delle figlie di S. Angela Merici attualmente esistenti, le quali, osservando integralmente la Regola approvata, come sopra abbiamo detto, dal Pontefice Paolo III, e recentemente ristabilita nella primitiva forma dal Vescovo Girolamo Verzeri danno opera solerte...".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>62</sup> Costituzioni Sinodali della Diocesi di Brescia, anno 1889, Parte III, capo VII, Delle monache e delle famiglie religiose, n.20, cit. in *Regola*, Brescia 1921, pp.100-101: "Proibiamo assolutamente di mutare anche in lievissima parte, o comechessia riformare le Regole di detta Compagnia, già dalla Chiesa approvate; e raccomandiamo di ritenerle e conservarle perfettamente quali furono dettate in principio. In caso diverso, noi non approviamo siffatta Congregazione, né come Società di Sant'Angela, né come Società nuovamente fondata: che anzi fin d'ora la riteniamo come non esistente, e ordiniamo che si abbia per tale, se non si riduca tosto alla Regola vera".

easier as there was no good way of making them known. But from 1947 onwards, the text of the Rule in twelve chapters had a wide circulation in Merician circles, thanks to a work of Mother Marie de St Jean Martin, prioress general of the Ursulines of the Roman Union; this was L'esprit de Ste Angèle Mérici, printed at Brescia in Morcelliana type. This French edition was followed by editions in five other languages. In the Italian one, the text of the Regola was retained in the vernacular. Round about 1950, therefore, the religious of the Order of St Ursula had in hand the Rule in twelve chapters.

In 1967, Battista Dassa<sup>64</sup> published in his turn the same Regola, taking it from the Secondo Libro Generale.

Then, in 1968, Teresa Ledóchowska made the text of Turlino's edition known in Merician circles and beyond.

And finally, in 1975, this same edition was reprinted in facsimile, with the text in modern Italian opposite, the work of Luciana Mariani and Elisa Tarolli.

Today the Rule of the primitive Company, in other words the Rule of the Foundress, is widely known in nearly all the branches of the Merician family, both Ursuline religious and secular Ursulines.

It constitutes in particular the "fundamental rule of life" for all the diocesan Companies which are united in an international Federation. This Federation is a Secular Institute and so, according to the Code of Canon Law, is an Institute of consecrated life. Unlike other Secular Institutes, however, the Federation of the Companies is not a centralised Institute; thus it does not have a central President, in other words a superior general. Each federated Company retains its full pastoral, administrative and economic autonomy; its individual relationship with the local bishop is determined by the sound traditions of the Company incorporated in its own Ordinances. The fraternal union of the Companies in the Federation is fostered by the "Federation Council" which is an organ of service; the President of this Council has the task of representing the Federation as such. But the exercise of authority is in the hands of the local Directress of each individual Company with her Council.<sup>65</sup>

In Brescia today there are two Rules in force, the Rule of St Angela and the Verzeri-Girelli Rule. In actual fact, the Company of Brescia, which had joined the Federation in 1958, divided into two in 1971: one

DASSA, La fondazione, op. cit., pp.309-335.
 Cf. Costituzioni della Compagnia di Sant'Orsola, Tipografia Poliglotta Vaticana, 1977, pp.8; 44-45; 37-38.

part remained federated Company of St Ursula, with the Rule of the primitive Company; the other, much more numerous, returned to the situation prior to 1958, opting for the Verzeri-Girelli Rule, and is known today as Company of St Angela.

#### The Rule of Frassinetti in France

We cannot close this section without speaking again of Abbé Richaudeau, the Ursuline chaplain at Blois.

In 1866, as he relates in his circular no.13 of 14 August, he received the visit of a French Jesuit; "Father R..." spoke to him about a Pious Union, very widespread in Italy under the title of "New Ursulines Daughters of Mary Immaculate", and explained to him his plan to introduce it into France, changing it into an institution in honour of the Sacred Heart.

Abbé Richaudeau had already begun the translation of the Frassinetti Rule, persuaded that it was truly identical with that of St Angela, the text of which he did not know. It seemed to him, therefore, that the initiative of this Jesuit, by changing the whole nature of the Merician institution, would deprive the Ursulines of a family right. So he made haste to complete the translation of the Rule and sent it to the press, replacing however in the title the words "New Ursulines" with "Secular Ursulines" which seemed to him to be more exact. This appeared as the

- Règle de la Pieuse Union des Ursulines séculières Filles de Marie Immaculée sous la protection de Sainte Ursule et de Sainte Angèle Merici. Opuscule traduit de l'Italien par M. l'Abbé P.F. Richaudeau Chanoine Honoraire, Ancien Professeur de Théologie, Aumônier des Ursulines de Blois, A Blois, chez l'Auteur, 1866.

The translation and the notes, not to mention the "Translator's Foreword", give proof of professional seriousness and honesty. The basic Italian text he used must have been a later edition than the 1864 one which had 207 articles, as the French one has only 205, the same number as would appear in the 1909 Italian edition.

With his natural openness and simplicity, Abbé Richaudeau asked the religious to help him circulate the little book which would be sold

for 35 centimes, and he involved them in his enterprise.

But this time the efforts of this incomparable friend of St Angela were not going to meet with success. The Pious Union of Secular Ursulines Daughters of Mary Immaculate would not have any following in France, as there was still a strong preference for the religious life behind the grilles of the Order of St Ursula.

### 3. OTHER RULES

The Rule of Brescia became a source of imitation or interpretation, or even just of inspiration for the Rules of the Company of St Ursula in other dioceses. We are going to present some of those which seem to us to represent the various ways of drawing upon the same original text. Foligno, Ferrara, Ferrara-Tournon, Bologna and Milan will provide us with some opportunities for noteworthy comparisons.

## a) The Rule of Foligno

One of the Rules which seems to us close to the reformed Brescian Rule is the

- Regola della Compagnia di Sant'Orsola di Fuligno estratta da molti luoghi di quella di Brescia, con aggiunta di alcune devote Constitutioni, mandate in luce ad istanza della medema Compagnia, et dedicate all'Illustrissimo et Reverendissimo Monsig. Porfirio Feliciani vescovo di Fuligno, in Fuligno, appresso Agostino Alterii, 1626.66

For the spiritual section, the text is very close to the Brescian one of 1582; it differs from it a little in the section connected with government, because in the small Umbrian town this assumed its own special structures.

A chapter entitled "Of Christian doctrine" is concerned with the catechetical instruction given to the young adolescent girls who attended the church of the Company in order to receive it: "This apostolic office, this highly meritorious spiritual work of mercy, this teaching given to those who know nothing about the articles of the holy Faith, will be entrusted by the Mother of the Company to the religious of whom she knows to be the most capable. She will often remind them that they should devote themselves to this charge with great charity; that they should be careful to see that the girls who meet together in their church to learn Christian doctrine (because it is understood that they are only responsible for teaching those), the oldest as well as the youngest, always learn something more, according to what they can learn at their age; and these things which they transmit to their memory, they must exhort them to want even more to put them into practice by what they do, by fleeing from sins, rendering true obedience to their superiors and aban-

<sup>66</sup> AGUUR, Rc. 6.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>67</sup> The word "religious" ("monache") is not surprising. It is the expression used to designate the virgins of the Company in those chapters of the Rule which do not come directly from the Brescian Rule.

doning worldly pleasures. They should correct the restless, they should encourage the humble and the obedient by distributing the usual prizes to those who behave the best. And, from time to time, the Mother of the Company will go there in person to attend to what is going on, so that the good rules may be observed". 67b

Chapter XXIII contains the "Ricordi dati dalla Beata Angela fondatrice della Compagnia, a tutte le monache, et in particolare a quelle che

hanno il governo della Compagnia".

In a short excursus reduced to the essential points, Chapter XXVII, "Del Cardinal protettore della Compagnia", gives in outline the historical development of the events of the first decades (let us recall that this Rule was printed in 1626). In 1598, as a member of Clement VIII's suite, Cardinal Baronio had passed through Foligno and had offered his help to the Mother of the Company, "a quell'hora non ancor monaca", who was meeting with strong opposition from the local bishop, Marcantonio Bizzoni. The intervention of Cardinal Baronio, who became protector of the nascent institution, had resulted in the desired foundation in 1600. In 1607, Baronio had been replaced by Cardinal Paolo Sfondrati, nephew of Gregory XIV. The new protector had gone expressly to Foligno to make the acquaintance of Father Giovanni Battista Vitelli, spiritual director of the foundress, Paola Sberna, and father of the Company.

The list of the cardinal-protectors continues with the names of Benedetto Giustiniani and Scipione Cobelluti and ends with that of "His

Serene Highness Maurice of Savoy".

These details find a parallel in the Life of the foundress of the Company, the Venerable Mother Paola of Foligno.<sup>68</sup>

Mother Paola was born at Foligno on 25 January 1571 and died on 20 July 1647. Under the direction of Father Vitelli, she had established the Company of St Ursula, modelling it on the one at Brescia.

68 MICHELANGELO MARCELLI da Foligno, Prete dell'Oratorio del Buon Gesù, Vita della venerabile Madre Paola da Foligno, fondatrice della Compagnia dell'Oratorio di S. Orsola in detta Città, in Roma, per

il Mascardi, 1659, AGUUR, Rc. 7.

Gordando de l'insegnare alli ignoranti gli articoli della santa Fede, la Madre della Compagnia lo commetta a quelle monache, nelle quali vi conoscerà maggiore abilità, ricordandogli spesso che faccino questa fadiga con gran carità. Usando diligenza che le zitelle, le quali convengono nella lor chiesa ad imparare la dottrina christiana (che a queste sole si intende che habbino carico d'insegnare), tanto le maggiori, quanto le minori, sempre imparino qualche cosa di più, secondo la capacità dell'età loro; essortando-le che quelle cose, che alla memoria mandano, molto più le vogliano mettere in essecutione con l'opere, in fuggire i peccati, in portare la vera obedienza a i loro maggiori, et lasciar le vanità. Corregano l'inquiete, et diano animo alle humili et obedienti: con distribuire i soliti premii a quelle che meglio si portano. Et la Madre della Compagnia, di quando in quando, voglia essa in persona rivedere et assistere a questi essercitii, acciò si mantenghino l'ordini buoni".

Father Vitelli had a friend, the Capuchin Mattia Bellintani of Salò, who had stayed at Foligno both as preacher and as guardian of the Franciscan community between 1561 and 1565. Bellintani had helped Vitelli to draw up the Statutes of the Oratory (or congregation) which he had founded.<sup>69</sup>

In 1598, Bellintani had had some of his sermons printed and had sent a copy of the edition to his friend Vitelli, "una cum biographia An-

gelae Merici, quam exaraverat".70

On 27 May he wrote to Vitelli "At the end of this last Lent, I sent you the book of the virgins of St Ursula with another one containing some of my sermons on the sorrows of Christ. They will go to Rome by the hand of M.R.P. Procurator of the Capuchins, who will send them on to you; but as they are travelling with some merchants and by their route, they will probably go slowly".<sup>71</sup> The "book of the virgins" was probably not the Life of the Foundress; it was far more likely to have been the Rule of the Brescian Company.

There exists, in actual fact, the transcription of a Regola immediately after Bellintani's Vita della B. Angela (given in the Monumenta Historica). The Prologue and the chapters which follow reproduce the text of the reformed Brescian Rule of 1582; the chapter on government, on the other hand, is the one from Angela's Rule, with a few spelling variants. The Ricordi, which had been included in the Borromean edition, are missing here; but the Legati have been summarised in the pages which deal with the first approvals and with the first modifications. Would this be the "book of the virgins"? Anyhow, Mother Paola had in hand the Rule of Brescia revised by Cardinal Borromeo and the Rule of Foligno is largely inspired by it.

The Ritual attached to the Rule follows closely, from certain aspects, the *Ordini et Ceremonie* of Brescia; the only differences are in the blessings of the habit and the veil.

The above-mentioned Vita della venerabile Madre Paola, "drawn from the Process instructed on the authority and approval of the Very Illustrious and Reverend Mgr Antonio Montecatino, bishop of the same City" makes no mention of Bellintani; the biography unfolds with simplicity

70 Ibid., p.L.

<sup>69</sup> Monumenta Historica Ordinis Minorum Capuccinorum, op. cit., vol.V, pp.XL-XLI.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p.LIX: "In fin di questa passata quaresima vi ho inviato il libro delle vergini di Santa Orsola con un altro di alcune mie prediche di dolori di Christo. Andranno a Roma in mano del M.R.P. Procuratore de Capuccini, il quale ve li manderà; ma perché vengono per via di mercatanti con rotte loro, facilmente vanno piano".

and clarity, and leaves no doubt as to its veracity.72

The Company of Foligno had its own special characteristics which distinguished it from all the other Italian Companies. With regard to the monastic community, about which we will be speaking, it may well have had a certain chronological priority compared with the enclosed Ursulines of the Order of St Ursula.

At least in the beginning, the Company of Foligno had an elitist character: the virgins had to have sufficient means so as not to be "forced to be over-anxiously preoccupied with providing for their food, and also because, remaining in the world, their own nobility and their parents' standing are a great protection for them".<sup>73</sup>

A second distinctive feature was the erection of an "oratory", and this from the earliest days; it was a building consisting of a number of rooms suitable for living a canonical enclosed life, and of some other rooms suitable for catechetical work and meetings. The virgins of the Company met together in the chapel for daily prayer, in as far as their family life would permit it.

It is interesting to note that the oratory became a privileged place for eucharistic adoration. Marcelli writes: "The same Prelate [Mgr Bizzoni] gave permission for the most Blessed Sacrament to be reserved in the oratory for the greater convenience and the spiritual benefit of the religious; and, a little later, he allowed it to be exposed for public veneration every feast-day".<sup>74</sup>

The oratory very soon became a centre of attraction: "And because the most Blessed Sacrament was exposed in this oratory on feast-days, and longer prayers were said there, a great throng of women used to come there, each one making haste to get through the domestic chores quickly so as to arrive in time at the oratory".

It also became a centre of spiritual light and animation for the faith-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>72</sup> Concerning the presumed foundation by a certain Angela Serafini of the Company of Brescia (and it is a fact that this name is to be found on f.101v of the Secondo Libro Generale under the date of 25 November 1562), a foundation confirmed by Faino, see GUERRINI, La Compagnia in S. Angela, op. cit., pp.178-181. In his discussion on this subject, Guerrini points out some inaccuracies in Faino's account.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>73</sup> MARCELLI, *Vita, op. cit.*, pp.42-43: "costrette con soverchia sollecitudine a procacciarsi il vitto con il lavoro; sì anco perché, restando esse nel secolo, è loro di gran difesa la propria nobiltà e l'honestà dei parenti".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>74</sup> Ibid., p.42: "Diede poi il medesimo Prelato licenza che per maggior commodità delle monache, e loro profitto spirituale, si tenesse il Santissimo Sagramento nell'oratorio; e, poco dopo, che nello stesso luogo tutti i giorni di festa si potesse esporre a pubblica venerazione".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.69-70: "È perché nei giorni festivi si esponeva nel medesimo oratorio il Santissimo Sagramento, e si facevano più lunghi esercizii, vi concorreva gran moltitudine di donne, procurando ciascuna di spedirsi dalle faccende domestiche, e giunger per tempo all'oratorio".

ful of all classes. Anticipating the carnival, Paola intensified and had others intensify the penances and prayers; she organised a chain of reparatory prayers "so that during all the hours of the day and most of the night, there are always, for the space of a month and in different places, many devout souls before his Divine Majesty to offer him reparation and to avert the deserved punishment".76

Apart from the title of "monache" by which the virgins of the Company were generally known, apart from the disciplinary norms, clearly imported from conventual life, the most unusual element was the establishment in the oratory, and therefore at the very heart of the Company, of an enclosed monastic community. "Oratory" served, therefore, as centre of the institution, catechetical school, meeting-place for the daily prayer of those who were able to participate, and enclosed monastery for a community of seven members of the Company who chose to lead a monastic life there, separated from the rest of the members. And the choice was for life.

Chapter XXII of the Rule begins thus: "The first and principal cause for the preservation of our Company in the true and holy service of God is to be found in the withdrawal of seven religious who, having left the paternal house and having stripped themselves of all affection for earthly things, desire to live for the rest of their life in the rooms of our oratory, and this purely for Jesus Christ".77

This is the most original element - and one which seems to have no explanation - for an association with the aim of welcoming young girls and women living in the world: "Apart from the religious who live at home, there are seven of them who live with the Mother Superior in enclosure. These are elected by the whole body of the Company, and they never have contact with anyone at all. And no-one ever enters the monastery.... They live completely apart from the distractions of the world".78 And the Rule spells out in detail: "They should possess nothing of their own; they should dispose of the time in such a way that, for

77 Ibid., p.45: "La principalissima causa, per la conservatione della nostra Compagnia nel vero et santo servitio de Dio, ha da essere il ritiramento di sette monache, che, lasciata la casa paterna et spogliate da ogni affetto terreno, vorranno abitare tutto il tempo della loro vita nelle stanze dell'oratorio nostro, puramente per Giesù Christo".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>76</sup> Regola, Foligno 1626, Ch.VI, p.24: "accioché in tutte l'ore del giorno et maggior parte della notte, sempre in diversi luoghi stiano molte anime divote, per un mese continovo, avanti a sua Divina Maestà per placarla et per riparare il meritato castigo".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>78</sup> MARCELLI, Vita, op. cit., pp.43-44: "Oltre alle monache, che habitano nelle proprie case, ve ne sono sette, che convivono con la Madre superiora nelle stanze dell'oratorio in clausura. Queste si eleggono da tutto il corpo della Compagnia, né trattano mai con alcuno. Nel monastero, poi, non entra mai persona alcuna... Vivono totalmente lontane dalle distrattioni del secolo...".

the most part, at any hour of the day and for a part of the night, there is always one of them at adoration before the Lord God, according to one's obedience. They should not occupy themselves with numerous works, but just enough to avoid being idle; and one or more of them should give her time, according to the Mother's direction, to instructing those young girls who have presented themselves to serve God in our Company,<sup>79</sup> in reading and in other exercises, but especially in the Christian virtues in order to prepare them to be true spouses of Jesus Christ. In short, having chosen for themselves ... the better part, which will never be taken away from them, they must preserve their body and soul in this holy house of God, as if in a paradise of delights, to give pleasure to his Divine Majesty".<sup>80</sup>

The proposal made to the virgins of the Company of St Ursula by Angela Merici, namely the radical gift of self, has been made here to fit into daily life, with contemplation clearly having the priority over action. This was one way of interpreting Angela's teaching: "... so, by prayer, we implore from God the true grace of the spiritual life; therefore we must pray unceasingly with our minds and hearts because of the continual need we have of God's help".81

The Rule also assigns to prayer a special intention, as is clearly stated in Chapter VIII. We are paraphrasing it as follows: to consecrate themselves to his Divine Majesty so that "forgetting themselves in all things", they offer up on behalf of the Holy See of Peter, for the increase in holiness of the Vicar of Christ and for the true reform of Holy Church, everything good, difficult and sorrowful which comes their way; and day and night, with ardent longings, they stay "before God on behalf of the Holy See of St Peter, because that is the end of all the prescriptions and the exercises of our Company". 82

And they were numerous enough, the exercises of mortification, individual and communal, which imprinted on the Company a character

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>79</sup> The aspirants had to spend three months in the oratory for their formation, but they did not share the life of the seven cloistered religious.

Regola, Ch.XXII, p.46: "Non possedano mai cosa di proprio; et dispensino in modo il tempo, che per il più, ogni ora del giorno et parte della notte, sempre ne stia qualch'una di loro all'oratione avanti al Signore Dio, come dall'obbedienza gli sarà ordinato. Non si occupino in molti lavori, ma quanto basta per fuggir l'otio, et una o più si affatighino, secondo che dalla Madre gli sarà commandato, in ammaestrare quelle zitelle che si sono presentate per servire a Dio nella nostra Compagnia, nel leggere et in altri essercitii, ma molto più nelle virtù christiane, per disporle ad essere vere spose di Giesù Christo. Et in somma, havendo eletto per loro... l'ottima parte, che non gli sarà tolta in eterno, devono conservare li corpi et l'anime loro in questa casa santa de Dio, come un paradiso di delitie, per il gusto di sua Divina Maestà".

<sup>81</sup> D3, Chapter "Prayer".

<sup>82</sup> Regola, Ch. VIII.

more like that of the monastic institutions than that of a secular institute.

On 10 July 1651, a solemn mass sung in the Cathedral inaugurated at Foligno the ordinary process for the beatification of Paola, foundress of the Company of St Ursula, a symbolic figure of that land of saints and mystics which is Umbria.

# b) The Rules of Ferrara and Ferrara-Tournon

Although not in such a direct and immediate way, the Rule of the Company of St Ursula at Ferrara was also derived from the reformed Rule of Brescia. The book which we possess, recently restored, 83 measuring 13.5 x 7cm, consists of two parts. The first, with frontispiece, is entitled

- Regole della Compagnia delle Vergini di Santa Orsola stampate per ordine del molto Ill. e R.mo Mons. Paolo Leone vescovo di Ferrara, in Ferrara, per Vittor. Baldini, 1587.

The second, without frontispiece, has the title

- Ordini del Governo della Compagnia di Santa Orsola.

The first is numbered in folios (with ff. numbered 1-33); the second is numbered in pages (with pp. numbered 1-94).

The Regole are dedicated by Mgr Leone to the members of the Company. Apart from some variants, due to the fact that circumstances were different, the dedication is closely modelled on the one that Cardinal Borromeo had addressed to the Mother and the virgins of the Company of St Ursula at Brescia on 31 October 1581. It is followed by a second dedication, unsigned, "Al Christiano lettore"; this is a eulogistic presentation of the institution which is named after St Ursula, "instituted by Our Lord God by means of a humble virgin of angelic ways called Angela, truly angelic". 836 The second dedication gives the names of the foundations already carried out at Milan, Venice and Verona; it draws attention to the fact that the one at Ferrara began on 22 May 1584, thanks to the initiative of the ordinary, and that it already numbers fifty members; it justifies this foundation by pointing out that it is responding to the desires of those young girls who want to consecrate themselves to God in spite of the different reasons which prevent them from entering an enclosed monastery, and it pays tribute to the Company in glowing

<sup>83</sup> AGUUR, Rb. 26.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>836</sup> "da Nostro Signore Iddio, per mezzo d'una verginella di costumi angelici per nome Angela, veramente angelica, instituita...".

terms, even forecasting the services which the virgins would one day be able to render at home or elsewhere.

The anonymous author takes time to list the various works to which the members of the Company would be able to devote themselves. Is it not important indeed "for the good education of young girls, of noble birth or otherwise, that there should be some devout and well-mannered virgins to whose reliability they can be entrusted, so that the virgins may teach them not only how to work and to read, but also instruct them in good manners and devotion? And again is it not important that there should be such virgins ready to devote themselves with fidelity and charity to the teaching of Christian Doctrine, so necessary in the schools for girls? And ready to serve in the women's Hospitals and in other pious works? And when they have reached a mature age, after having led a life of edification, how useful in God's service cannot they be by being employed in the government of the 'luoghi pii' which have such a great need of them? ... having their eyes always fixed on the honour of God and on the edification of their neighbour, waiting for their eternal reward in paradise".83c

The anonymous editor of the dedication "Al Christiano lettore" (probably the printer himself, as was the custom) had taken this passage and also some others, copying them almost word for word, from the preface to the Treatise of Denis the Carthusian which Giolito had printed and published for the Company of St Ursula.<sup>84</sup>

The part entitled Regole is concerned with the commitments of a spiritual nature and the doctrine which runs through them; the part entitled Ordini deals with the government.

The Prologue of St Angela's Rule – which lays the foundation of Merician spirituality – remains unchanged, except for a few readjustments needed to modernise the language. The chapters do not follow the

Lettera di Giovanni Giolito premessa al Trattato del D. Dionisio Certosino dell' lodevol Vita delle Vergini, pubblicato dallo stesso Giolito in Venezia nel 1584, in-12, e da lui indirizzato alla Congregazione di Sant'Orsola, in Card. Agostino Valiero vescovo di Verona, Modo di vivere proposto alle Vergini che si chiaman Dimesse, ovvero che vivono nelle lor case con voto o proposito di perpetua castità, novella impressione accuratissima, in Padova appresso Giuseppe Comino 1744,

pp.XXI-XXIII.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>83c</sup> "per la buona educatione delle figliuole, e nobili e d'ogni conditione, che ci siano vergini divote e costumate, alla cui fede si possino raccommandare, acciò non solamente le ammaestrino nel lavorare e leggere, ma nelli buoni costumi e nella divotione? Poi, quanto importa che ci siano tali vergini per adoperarsi con fedeltà e carità nell' insegnar la Dottrina Christiana tanto necessaria nelle scuole delle putte? Per servir ne gl'Hospitali delle donne, ed in altre opere pie? E quando siano arrivate ad una matura età con buona prova et edificatione, con quanto servitio di Dio possono esser adoperate per governo de i luoghi pii, che ne hanno tanta carestia?... havendo sempre l'occhio all'honore di Dio et all'edificatione de i prossimi, aspettando l'eterna retributione nel paradiso".

same order as in the Brescian Rule; immediately after the chapter on admission come the ones on the three evangelical counsels. Then follow Prayer, Fasting, Confession and Communion, Mass and Sermon, the inspiration of which is certainly Merician. A new theme makes its appearance, however, that of Christian Doctrine which the members of the Company had to teach on feast-days. A "new" theme in so far as it has been singled out for separate treatment, whereas the reformed Brescian Rule was content to give the subject only a brief mention in the chapter intended for the "Maestre": "They will be reminded that all, as their Father confessor considers fit, should carry out some pious work, and in particular that of Christian Instruction; that they should be at the disposal of their superiors and obedient to them and should conduct themselves in the exercise of that work in such a way that they do not fail to teach good manners as well as doctrine".84b

This work of instruction was a function which the Brescian Ursulines were carrying out extensively, a point previously stressed in 1566 by Father Francesco Landini in his letter to Visdomini. And the Schools of Christian Doctrine - already firmly organised - played a prominent role in the pastoral programme of Cardinal Borromeo. Perhaps it was for these reasons that the Legislator of the Brescian Rule, believing that it went without saying that this work was carried out, had not drawn special attention to the matter.

Similarly, the recommendation inserted in the Regulations of the "Maestre" written in the Secondo Libro Generale is very restrained: "That [the virgins] should go to the Christian Institution or carry out out some other pious work according to the counsel of the confessor or of the matron of their colonello".85

But the Rules which we are speaking about here lay stress on the pious work of catechetics as being the work which the virgins of the Company must carry out; and that had already been written into the 1567 Rule of Milan.

The Rule of Ferrara, which borrows in part from the Milanese Rule the chapter "In che si hanno di essercitar le feste", says in particular: "On feast-days ... she should always try to occupy herself in pious exercises, such as reading spiritual books, meditating and praying; and in particular

85 "Che vadino alla institution christiana, overo esercitino qualche altra opera pia secondo il conseglio del confessore, over madonna del suo collonello". For the Regola of Brescia, cf. Ch.19, pp.56-57;

for the Regulations, cf. SLG, f.256r; the extract from Landini's letter is in D15.

<sup>84</sup>b "Gli ricordino che tutte, secondo il giudicio del loro Padre confessore, in qualche opra pia s'essercitino, et in particolare nell'opra della Institutione Christiana, siano pronte et obediente alli loro superiori, nel qual essercitio così si portino, che non manco si sforcino insegnar li buon costumi che

she should go (if she can) to the Schools of Christian Doctrine; and there she should practise teaching or learning what is taught and learnt there. And while she is there, she should not only occupy herself with this exercise, but with ever greater charity, she should encourage the others to frequent the most holy Sacraments and to have the fear of God; and she should make every effort to attract them to this holy Company so that they may keep themselves pure for the Lord". 86

Personal formation, therefore, catechetical teaching, contacts with others with an apostolic orientation, spiritual animation of one's neighbours and diffusion of the ideal of the consecrated life, in all these there is a widening of the horizon with regard to an apostolic activity which will be spelt out in greater detail in the *Ordini*. Out of all the various activities envisaged in the address "Al Christiano lettore" placed before the Rule, it would be catechesis, with all its implications, which would form the specific work undertaken by the Company of St Ursula at Ferrara.

The Ordini del governo della Compagnia are divided into 34 chapters. Regarding the composition of the government, there is a "head" and a "body": The "Head not only of this government, but of the whole Company, as is the case moreover for all other pious associations, will be the Prelate of the City, upon whose favour and authority the Company is totally dependent. The following officers will form the Body of this Congregation: a mother general, a vicar and secretary, four assistants, twelve special matrons, an assistant-secretary or chancellor, a general commissioner, four novice-mistresses, twelve commissioners or as many as are needed, four protectors, two priests and two seculars".<sup>86b</sup> The "Head" has no direct role in the government; he does not intervene at the meetings, not even through a delegate, except for convoking the Chapter of election of the mother general after the death of the preceding one, and only if he wants to.<sup>87</sup>

Regola, Ferrara, f.27r-v: "Nelli giorni di festa... cerchi sempre di occuparsi in essercitii pii, come in leggere libri spirituali, meditare et orare, e specialmente (potendo) in andare alle Scuole della Dottrina Christiana, et ivi essercitarsi ad insegnare, o imparare ciò che ivi si insegna e s'impara. Et essendo ivi, non solo attenda a tale essercitio, ma estendendo la carità, cerchi sempre di essortare l'altre a frequentare i Santissimi Sacramenti, ad haver'il timor di Dio; et a tirarle in questa santa Compagnia per conservarsi pure al loro Signore".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>866</sup> Il "Capo non solo di questo governo, ma di tutta la Compagnia, come anche suol'essere di tutte l'altre opere pie, sarà il Prelato della Città, dal quale deve aspettare ogni favore et autorità. Il Corpo di questa Congregatione haverà le infrascritte officiali: una madre generale, una vicaria e secretaria, quattro assistenti, dodeci governatrici particolari, una sottosecretaria o cancelliera, una avisatrice generale, quattro maestre delle novitie, dodeci avisatrici o tante che bastino; quattro protettori, due ecclesiastici e due secolari".

<sup>87</sup> Ordini, Ferrara, p.19.

The government was thus entirely in the hands of the matrons and the virgins of the Company, as Angela Merici had envisaged it.

The distinctive feature of this Rule of Ferrara, as we have already noted, is the role that was given to the teaching of the Christian doctrine. The various officers of the Company, beginning with the mother general, were all directly involved in the Schools of Doctrine, carrying out administrative functions, or tasks of teaching, assisting or supervising. The smooth running of these schools was a matter to be discussed at the meetings of the government; the assistants at council-meetings "will also discuss the needs of the Christian Doctrine" and will arrange for "the matrons to visit their Schools, etc."88

At the meeting of those responsible for a district, "the needs of the Schools of Christian Doctrine of that particular district will also be discussed".89

The Ricordi, according to the text published in the 1582 Brescian Rule, were inserted in the pages devoted to government.

Given the importance which the Rule of Ferrara would assume in Ursuline history, we would like to copy out here Chapter XXXI:

"Of the Christian Doctrine.

"And since the Company of St Ursula has been willing, out of charity, to take charge of the Schools of Christian Doctrine for girls in order to occupy there on feast-days those who are apt and able, they are all entreated to give their attention to such an important work, some by visiting the girls and directing them, others by teaching them, others again by making them keep silent and remain quiet, or by leading them to the churches where they will be taught, seeking to put their charges on the right path, teaching them the things necessary for their salvation, not only by words, but much more by actions.

"In the meetings which they will hold for the Company of St Ursula, they will always discuss something in connection with the Schools of

Doctrine, whenever they see there is a need.

"If they cannot deal with some disorder, or if the door-keepers of the Schools are at fault, they will have recourse to the Rector of the Doctrine, or the Father responsible for the Doctrine; they can also call in the protectors of the Company.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, Ch.IV: "... parleranno anche delli bisogni della Dottrina Christiana; se le governatrici visitino le loro Scuole, ecc.".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>89</sup> Ibid., Ch.V: "... tratterà ancora de' bisogni delle Scuole della Dottrina Christiana di quel quartiero".

"All the officers will see that they have a list of the Schools: the mother general and the vicar, of all the Schools, with the mistresses and other helpers; the assistants, of the Schools which are in their districts; and the matrons, of their particular Schools.

"And as the Company of Christian Doctrine has its own Rules laid

down for this purpose, nothing will be added here".90

In the National Art Gallery of Ferrara there is a painting by Giuseppe Mazzuoli called the Bastarolo (1536c.-1589), which probably has links with the foundation of the Company of St Ursula at Ferrara. It is an oil-painting, on canvas, measuring 300 x 200cm, and represents the Virgin Mary in glory with Sts Barbara and Ursula and some young girls.<sup>91</sup>

The figure of St Barbara was clearly a homage to the memory of Duchess Barbara of Austria, wife of Duke Alfonso II of Este, lord of Ferrara, as it was she who had founded the conservatory for girls which was also named St Barbara; the figure of St Ursula was very likely meant to recall the foundation of the Company which carried her name, and which had Bishop Leone as its sponsor. A year earlier (the altar-piece for the chapel of the conservatory of St Barbara had been commissioned in 1588), the Regole of the Company had been published, together with the dedication about which we have been speaking.

The painter has represented the "zitelle" (girls of more or less adolescent age) listening to the instruction given by some young women each holding a book. It seems obvious to us that the latter are the virgins of the Company in the act of carrying out their apostolic role of teaching Christian doctrine. Is it not a fact that one day Carlo Doneda himself

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., pp.82-84:

<sup>&</sup>quot;Della Dottrina Christiana. E poi che la Compagnia di S. Orsola per sua carità s'è contentata pigliar carico delle Scuole delle putte della Dottrina Christiana per occuparvisi, quelle che sono atte et possono, le feste, si pregano tutte ad haverne quella cura che tale opera ricerca, altre in visitarle e governarle, altre in ammestrarle, altre in farle tener silentio e star modeste, et altre in condurle alle chiese dove si insegna, procurando d'incaminar le figliuole nella buona via, con insegnar loro le cose necessarie alla salute, non solo con parole, ma molto più con li fatti. Nelle congregationi che faranno per la Compagnia di S. Orsola, tratteranno anche sempre qualche cosa delle Scuole della Dottrina, secondo vedranno esser bisogno. Non potendo provedere a qualche disordine, o mancando i portinari delle Scuole, faranno ricorso al Rettore della Dottrina o vero al Padre che della Dottrina ha il carico; servendosi anche de i protettori della Compagnia. Procureranno tutte le officiali d'haver una lista delle Scuole: la madre generale et la vicaria di tutte, con tutte le maestre et altre coadiutrici; le assistenti di quelle che sono ne i suoi quartieri. Et le governatrici, delle loro Scuole particolari. Et perché la Compagnia della Dottrina Christiana ha le sue Regole ordinate da sua posta, non si dirà qui altro".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>91</sup> Regione Emilia-Romagna, Istituto per i Beni Culturali, Arti e Pietà. I patrimoni culturali delle Opere Pie, Cooperativa Libraria Universitaria Editrice, Bologna, 1980.

would write: "è quasi lo stesso dire un'Orsolina come il dire una Maestra"?92

The virgins of the Company have been painted by Mazzuoli in the attitude which characterised them, namely that of educators of the faith through the teaching of the catechism.

The Rule of Ferrara was destined to carry to the other side of the Alps the name of the Company of St Ursula, the special catechetical orientation of the Ferrara group and the name of the foundress, Angela Merici.

For the path taken by this Italian Rule and for filling in the background of where it took root, we are referring to the study of Marie de Chantal Gueudré.<sup>93</sup>

In France, the cradle of the Merician branch, which very quickly would spread through Europe, was in Provence, or to be more exact Comtat Venaissin <sup>94</sup>, a papal enclave where both Italian and French were spoken and where the diocesan bishops were usually Italian. The chief city was Avignon. The first Ursulines were guided by two priests, Blessed César de Bus, founder of the Christian Doctrine Fathers, and Jean-Baptiste Romillon, his collaborator, and two different groups of young women were brought together by a common ideal, in other words the Merician ideal of a nuptial consecration of self to Christ, which then overflows into spiritual maternity.

The group at Avignon had as their leader Françoise de Bermond, daughter of the king's Treasurer General in Provence; the second group was led by Sybille de Mazan, daughter of Baron de Vaucluse.

Sybille de Mazan, young, rich and beautiful, was not short of suitors; but she had resolved to consecrate herself to Jesus Christ. As her health was not good enough to allow her to face a monastic Rule, she decided to keep her family and admirers quiet by making a public vow of chastity into the hands of the bishop. Through him she came to hear about the kind of life led by the virgins at Milan, and it was he who presented her with the *Regola* of Ferrara as a gift.

We would like to give an account of these events by copying out a passage which has kept all the flavour of bygone days: "Ce sage Prélat, après avoir receu publiquemente le voeu de virginité qu'elle fit entre ses

<sup>92</sup> DONEDA, Vita, op. cit., p.109.

<sup>93</sup> GUEUDRÉ, Histoire de l'Ordre des Ursulines en France, op. cit., I, Ch.I and II.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>94</sup> Comtat Venaissin had been handed over to Pope Gregory X by Philip III (the Bold) in 1274. The Legislative Assembly, by a unilateral decision, restored it to France in 1791. It was only in 1797 that the Holy See accepted this "fait accompli".

mains, et fait le panégyrique de sa vertu et de la généreuse résolution avec laquelle elle méprisoit tous les avantages de la nature et de la fortune, l'exhorta en particulier de persévérer dans ce saint propos; et luy ayant donné plusieurs bonnes instructions pour se perfectionner dans l'estat qu'elle venoit d'embrasser et de vouer à Dieu, il l'entretint longtemps de la façon de vivre des Ursulines que Saint Charles avoit establies dans Milan, et luy fit présent d'un livre de leurs Constitutions qu'il avoit apporté de Ferrare, où cette Congrégation estoit en très-haute estime. Cette Demoiselle l'acepta avec beaucoup de témoignages de reconnoissance, et le mit aussi-tost après entre les mains de Mr. Romillion...".95

Father Romillon, after examining the Rule of Ferrara, "se mit à genoux, et dit à Dieu ... 'Voici enfin, mon doux Iésus, ce que vous me faisiez souhaitter depuis si long-temps, et l'accomplissement de vos saintes promesses; voici le contract de mariage qui vous doit unir inséparable-

ment vos chastes Espouses' ...".%

This "marriage-contract", which was the Rule of Ferrara and which was believed to be the Rule of Angela Merici, responded admirably to the idea of establishing a feminine branch of the congregation of the Christian Doctrine Fathers. Father Romillon ensured that the group at Avignon knew about the Regola and immediately received Françoise de Bermond's total acceptance of it.

About 1594, Françoise had already obtained permission from Clement VIII, both for herself and for her group of friends, to teach Christian doctrine in public to young girls; and this permission had been further enriched by the apostolic blessing and an indulgence. From that time onwards she had devoted herself to this teaching, and she even extended it to women whenever the opportunity presented itself.<sup>97</sup> But now the *Regola* and the *Ordini* of Ferrara had arrived, just at the right time to give a well-defined structure to a group which up to then had been founded on ties of friendship and whose informal activity had been on a voluntary basis. The pages of the Rule, with the Merician Prologue on the spousal state of the virgins of St Ursula and with the following chapters on the evangelical counsels and the other themes dealt with by Angela, even though re-elaborated, transmitted to the two groups, the one at Avignon and the other at Mazan, the fundamental lines of Merician spirituality: it was a "marriage-contract".

96 Ibid., p.171.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>95</sup> CLAUDE BOURGUIGNON, La vie du Père Romillion, prestre de l'Oratoire de Jésus et fondateur de la Congrégation des Ursulines en France, à Marseille, chez Claude Garcin Imprimeur ordinaire du Roy, à l'Enseigne du nom de Iesus, 1669.

<sup>97</sup> Chroniques de l'Ordre, op. cit., t.I, p.96.

The Ordinances, thanks to the publication of the Ricordi (although not in the original version) made known the teachings dictated by Angela for the colonelle responsible for exercising authority and for watching over the ongoing formation of the virgins who were in their charge.

Wisdom, psychological observation, "piacevolezza" and firmness, family spirit, understanding and discipline, and a faith-filled glance at everything, in other words all the characteristics of the Merician government, would be transposed to the educative activity of these daughters of Angela Merici, giving them the basic criteria of a sound pedagogy which anticipated – in certain ways – the modern science of education.

This is one of the Merician legacies which the first French Ursulines received from the Rule of Ferrara, and in the course of centuries, they would hand it on and preserve it, regardless of the changes made in the structures and ordinances.

About the Foundress of the Company, however, the Rule of Ferrara said nothing except that she was a virgin called Angela. It was the extract from Landini's letter <sup>98</sup> which helped to give her a face. This had certainly reached the first nucleus of French Ursulines through one of the Rules of Milan, probably brought by Mgr Bichi, the bishop who had informed Sybille de Mazan about the existence of the Ursulines of Milan and their way of life. The portrait which emerged from this document was that of a woman before whose contemplative gaze the heavens opened; intrepid pilgrim, audacious foundress of a new form of consecrated life, enlightened counsellor, teacher of faith to theologians and doctors. There was enough material here to look upon her as mother and to see in her a model of the contemplative who, from the depths of her own contemplation, radiates the message of the gospel to all those round her.

But the juridical position of the young women who would enter the Company had to be clarified. And so, taking it from the Rule of Milan, the Brief was added by which Gregory XIII had given approval to the Company of Milan on 24 December 1582. As the Bull of Paul III (which seems to have been unknown to Françoise de Bermond) had done, this Brief gave the same status to the members of the Company as to those women who belonged to a canonical state of life, marriage or religious life. The virgins of the Company, as such, found themselves emancipated; they now had the legal right to enter into possession of any inheritance or any other goods which might come to them, even if they were bound to the condition about getting married or making profession in a monastery.

<sup>98</sup> D15.

Landini's extract and Gregory XIII's Brief had been published together for the first time in the 1585 Rule of Milan. We can assume, therefore, that this was the edition in the hands of the group at Avignon.

In 1597, the translation into French of the Regola of Ferrara and of its Ordini del governo was completed. Françoise de Bermond added to it the translation of Landini's Estratto, Gregory XIII's Brief in Latin and the translation of a "Sommario delle sodette Lettere apostoliche" which followed the Brief in the 1585 Milanese Regola.

Thus appeared the

- Reigles de la Compagnie des Vierges de Saincte Ursule mises en lumière par le commandement du Révérendissime Evesque de Ferrare et du très-illustre Cardinal de Saincte Praxède, archevesque de Milan et à son instance approuvées par nostre Sainct Père Grégoire XIII, et depuis par Sixte V, à Tournon, par Claude Michel, imprimeur de l'Université, 1597.99

Meanwhile, the first group of French Ursulines was gradually taking on its own specific features: "Notre Soeur de Bermond, suivant l'Institut de la B. Mère Angèle, ne vécut pas d'abord en communauté avec ses compagnes; mais chacune demeurant chez leurs parens, elles s'assembloient souvent, et recevoient les ordres de la mesme Soeur leur supérieure, pour vaquer aux oeuvres de charité. En mesme temps les révérends Pères de la Doctrine chrestienne commençoient leur Institution dans la mesme ville d'Avignon. Ils prirent charitablement la direction des Filles de Ste Ursule, leur enseignèrent la méthode de faire le Catéchisme. Et, ayant jugé aussi bien que d'autres grands personnages, que la vie des mesmes filles estoit périlleuse tant qu'elles demeureroient parmy le monde, ils portèrent la Soeur Françoise de Bermond à assembler ses Soeurs en communauté; ce qu'elle fit très volontiers l'an 1596", 100

But was it really the "dangers of the world" which largely prompted them to come together as a community? There is perhaps another factor which should not be overlooked: the apostolic work in common must have created a community of interests, activities, initiatives, with all that was involved in this by way of coordination, of pooling everyone's abilities and personal aptitudes, all the things that a common search for greater apostolic efficiency rendered inevitable. From this

100 Chroniques de l'Ordre, op. cit., t.I, p.97.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>99</sup> There is a copy at Vesoul, Archives Départementales de la Haute-Saône, Bibliothèque Muni-

flowed yet another advantage, namely that of the immediate mutual

support, both moral and spiritual, which they received.

And so, little by little, there was a transition from the Company of St Ursula whose members lived with their families to an elementary kind of association, then to the congregated form with a minimum of structures needed for living together, and finally without any traumatic upheaval and without any break of continuity, to the community life of a congregation with simple vows. But the Rule of Ferrara-Tournon had remained the same; its spirituality, drawing its main strength from the Merician "Prologue" and "Counsels", remained unchanged; and this spirituality had found a particular dimension in the recollection of the religious house and in the times set aside for contemplation and communal prayer.

All this had taken place at Avignon and nearby.

Later on, not only in Provence, but also throughout France and in Europe, the houses of common life under the title of St Ursula would increase in number. They came into being in a variety of ways, through filiation, or autonomously, or just by the spread of the Rule of the Company; some would go through a similar evolutionary process as at Avignon with secular life in their family, then simply associated, and then congregated. These foundations were nearly always based on the Rule of Tournon, which carried on its opening pages the Brief of Gregory XIII for the approval of the Company established at Milan.

It may have been on account of this Brief that the first French Ursulines considered themselves dispensed from obeying Pius V's Constitution regarding the application of the Decrees of the Council of Trent on religious life. 101 All the more so as "les décisions du Concile de Trente sur les Réguliers n'avaient pas encore pleine force de loi, à raison de

l'esprit gallican et des résistances des Parlements". 102

But later, Paul V would not hesitate to confront the congregated Ursulines with an alternative: either to become enclosed religious with solemn vows or to return to the state of being a secular Company, without any of the appurtenances of a religious institution. The congregated Ursulines opted for the religious way of life, on condition, though, of being able to continue exercising their mission as educators of the faith, according to the spirit of "the Counsels given by the venerable Mother Angela foundress of the Company of St Ursula", and which they had

102 GUEUDRÉ, Histoire de l'Ordre, op. cit., t.I, p.101.

<sup>101</sup> GERMAIN LESAGE OMI, L'accession des Congrégations à l'État religieux canonique, Les Éditions de l'Université d'Ottawa, Ottawa, Ontario, 1952, pp.95-97 and 120ff.

all had the opportunity of reading and meditating upon in the book of the Rule of Ferrara-Tournon.

This Rule would be replaced, out of necessity, by that of St Augustine, but nevertheless the awareness of having had Angela Merici as mother would give rise to a whole range of devotions which would play a major contributory role in her beatification.<sup>103</sup>

## c) The Rule of Bologna

The Archbishopric Archives of Bologna have in their keeping a manuscript of Cardinal Gabriele Paleotti (1522-1597), registered "Visite Pastorali vol.45, già H-537". It is an in-folio manuscript, bound in parchment, with ff. numbered 1 to 90; copied out in different handwriting, it is entitled *Governo Archiepiscopale in Bologna*. It was a kind of memorandum intended for the bishop's collaborators so that they would know what to do when he was absent.

Paleotti had attended the Council of Trent and had followed its sessions until the end. While he was there, no doubt he had met Bollani. Both Paleotti and Bollani were friends of Charles Borromeo. They may even have discussed together the problem arising from the case of the young girls who felt called to lead a life consecrated to Christ, but who did not have the vocation or the qualities required for embracing the religious life.

On f.28r of the manuscript in question, under the title "Luoghi Pii per le donne", the memorandum declares: "It would be necessary also to establish a Congregation under the name of St Ursula or of Charity, or some other name, with good rules for the young girls who do not want to get married or cannot enter religious life and yet want to serve God in a chaste life, as is being done at Milan, Verona and in other big cities". 103b

It seems, though, that Paleotti did not proceed to establish the Company of St Ursula in his diocese; this would actually be undertaken by his successor. It was only in 1603 that there appeared a

- Compendio de gli Instituti della Compagnia di S. Orsola, che si disegna eriggere nella Città di Bologna, in Bologna, per Vittorio Benacci, 1603.

<sup>103</sup> Cf. supra, Pt.III, Ch.IV. See also D38.

<sup>10316 &</sup>quot;Serìa ancor necessario fare una Congregatione sotto nome di Santa Orsola, o della Charità, o altro, con buone regole per quelle giovene che non vogliono maritarsi, né possono monacharsi, et desiderano servire a Dio in vita continente, come si usa in Milano, Verona et altre Città grandi..."

A copy of this can be found in the Biblioteca dell'Archiginnasio of Bologna, registered A.V.H.VI.5/114. In addition to the frontispiece, it

consists of seven pages.

The bishop at that time was Alfonso Paleotti, cousin of Gabriele whose coadjutor he had been before succeeding him in the bishopric. The introduction to the Compendio explains how the bishop, seeing the effectiveness of the Merician establishment in the other large dioceses, had proposed to institute the Company also in Bologna. The editor of the introduction continues: "With this end in view, he has asked for a brief résumé to be made of the Rules of this Company and for them to be accommodated to the needs and customs of Bologna, so that everyone having had time to see what the Company is and what should be observed in it, those who want to consecrate themselves to Jesus Christ their Spouse will decide to enter there and so give a good start to this holy institute. And when this has been established, detailed rules will be drawn up and adapted according as the need should arise, the intention of this Compendio being only to serve as short instruction and invitation to the young girls who feel inspired to embrace the state of holy virginity in their own home and so that, on reading it, they may give careful consideration to entering the Company, providing it is established by then". 104

The Compendio "ad experimentum" actually only consisted of the practical applications, in other words the disciplinary and structural aspects of the future institution. Even so, it must have been favourably received by a good number of candidates as, only five years later, the following Rule had to be published:

- Regole della Compagnia di S. Orsola eretta in Bologna da Mons. illustriss. e reverendiss. Alfonso Paleotti arcivescovo di detta Città, Confirmata et di molte indulgenze favorita dalla Santità di Nostro Signore Papa Paolo Quinto. Di nuovo reviste, ampliate e ristampate. In Bologna, per Vittorio Benacci, 1608. The copy in the Biblioteca dell'Archiginnasio di Bologna is registered A.V.H.VI.6/22. It consists of 191 pages.

In the dedication "Al suo diletto Popolo", Paleotti recalls the

Compendio, Bologna 1603, p.[2]: "a quest'effetto ha ordinato che si riduchino in breve compendio le Regole di questa Compagnia, accommodate al bisogno et usanze di Bologna, accioché, veduto c'havrà ciascuna commodamente ciò che sia detta Compagnia, et quello c'habbia da osservare in essa, possino, quelle che vorranno dedicare se stesse a Giesù Christo loro Sposo, risolvere d'entrarvi e dare buon principio a questo santo instituto. Quale, incaminato che sia, si formaranno poi le regole diffuse e proportionate, secondo che si conoscerà il bisogno, dovendo questo compendio servire solamente per breve instruttione et invito a quelle giovani che si sentiranno inspirate d'abbracciare lo stato della santa virginità nelle proprie case; et accioché, vedendole, possino maturamente deliberar se, facendosi questa Compagnia, risolvono d'entrarvi".

Foundress: She "had no other purpose, when she set up this Company, but to multiply the spouses of Christ our Saviour and to extend the most pious state of virginity. This state which, up to that day had been largely restricted to Monasteries, she carried into the houses and palaces of the world; and by so doing, she helped many families to lead a Christian life; because this Company is a Company of virgins who, dressed in humble and modest secular clothes and under the government of matrons highly respected for their spirit and their prudence, live at home or in someone else's house in great purity of life and integrity of behaviour. And so it happens, as experience has shown in very many cases, that when the number of virgins with fervent spirit and of exemplary life increases in profane houses ..., entire families easily return to a more disciplined and Christian life thanks to the good care that [the Company] takes of these virgins and to the assistance it offers them by way of spiritual conversations, frequent reception of the Sacraments, mortifications and other similar things ...".105

This praise of the Company was then strengthened by the reminder of the approvals of Paul III, Gregory XIII and Paul V.

Only three years after the publication of this *Regola* of Bologna, the bishop of Reggio, Claudio Rangoni, published the Rule for the Company in his own diocese <sup>106</sup> and, finding that there was no need to improve on the dedication "Al suo diletto Popolo", he repeated it under his own name; he made a few minor changes to adapt it to the local situation but included the passage quoted above without any changes in it.

At the beginning of the Regola of Bologna, Mgr Paleotti put the "Proemio della Beata Angela prima fondatrice della Compagnia di S. Orsola. Alle vergini di detta Compagnia", taking the text from the Brescian Regola. But for the section on the norms and for the way they are set out, he departed widely from it, so much so that the Regola of Bologna

Regola della Compagnia di Sant'Orsola eretta in Reggio e di nuovo riformata da monsig. ill.mo e reverendiss. sig. co. Claudio Rangoni vescovo di detta Città e prencipe, in Reggio, per Flavio e Flaminio Bartoli, 1611. The Ricordi have been omitted; the rest of the Regola follows Paleotti's almost literally.

Regola, Bologna 1608, pp.5-6: "nell'instituir questa Compagnia, non hebbe altro fine che di moltiplicare spose a Christo Salvator nostro, e dilatare lo stato devotissimo della verginità, stendendolo da Monasterii (dentro a quali fin'a quell'hora era stato quasi ristretto) anco entro le case e palazzi del secolo; e, per questa via, aiutar molte famiglie a vivere christianamente essendo, questa, Compagnia de' vergini, le quali in habito secolare, modesto però e humile, sotto governo di matrone, di spirito e prudenza venerande, vivono o nelle proprie case loro o in casa d'altri in grande purità di vita et integrità di costumi. Dal che avviene, come l'esperienza ha dimostrato in moltissime, che, seminandosi per le case profane vergini di fervente spirito et essemplar vita ..., mediante la buona custodia che di loro si ha e gli aiuti che se le danno di ragionamenti spirituali, frequenza de' Sacramenti, mortificationi e simili, facilmente sì riducono le famiglie intiere per mezo di queste a vita più regolata e christiana...".

should be spoken of as being only "vaguely Merician in origin". The text dictated by the Foundress, in actual fact, has become unrecognisable, lost as it is in the whole, submerged by the multiplicity of prescriptions, reminders, trivial details. The expressions "her spouse" and "heavenly spouse", however, which are at the heart of Angela's message, often recur as well as the reference to the love of God and for God, and this helps to establish a real bond, even if not very apparent, with the spirit of the "Beata Angela prima fondatrice".

The Rule is divided into three parts. The first, directed more towards formation, has a marked spiritual doctrine; the second, which is concerned with government, is also impregnated with a deep spirituality; it contains the *Ricordi*, touched up here and there; the third section deals with the procedures to be followed for the various meetings, the stages

of formation, the Ritual.

Also in this Rule of Bologna, as we have already seen in the one of Ferrara, the virgins of the Company were expected to devote themselves to Christian Doctrine: "And on every feast-day of obligation, they will all go and teach Christian Doctrine in the Schools to which they have been told to go by the Prioress General of the Company of this Doctrine, unless they are dispensed from doing so by the Mother for some legitimate reason. They should apply themselves to this holy work with great charity, humility and patience, not complaining at any inconvenience, at any sacrifice of their own spiritual tastes [which would be involved] in carrying out such a high and divine office, of such great service to the Christian people and so pleasing to God". And "they should be obedient to the superiors of the Doctrine and conform to the regulations of their Schools, making every effort to teach Christian customs at the same time as doctrine, both by their word and by their example". 107

The virgins of the Company of Bologna would follow this Regola until the beginning of the 20th century, and this without any interruption because they were never suppressed or dispersed. There would be a succession of reprints, but without any great changes except for the inevitable up-dating made necessary by the evolution of the language or

of the local situation.

Regola, Bologna 1608, parte I, cap.VII, pp.32-33 and p.117: "Et ogni festa di precetto, vadino tutte ad insegnare la Dottrina christiana a quelle Scole, che dalla Priora generale della Compagnia di detta Dottrina le sarà ordinato, se non fossero per qualche legittima causa dalla Madre dispensate. Nella qual sant'opera doveranno essercitarsi con molta carità, humiltà e patienza, non lasciandosi rincrescere qual si voglia incomodo, o privatione d'altri suoi gusti spirituali, per attendere ad un'ufficio tanto alto e divino, e di tanta utilità al popolo christiano e grato a Dio". And "dovranno essere obedienti alle superiori di essa, et accommodarsi a gl'ordini delle loro Scole, sforzandosi insieme con la dottrina, d'insegnare ancora i costumi christiani, e con le parole, e con l'essempio".

The last reprint from the point of view of date is entitled:

- Regola della Compagnia di Sant'Orsola già eretta in Bologna l'anno 1606 da monsignor Alfonso Paleotti arcivescovo secondo di detta Città, arricchita di molte indulgenze dai Sommi Pontefici Paolo V e Alessandro VII, ed in oggi protetta dall'eminentissimo signor Domenico Svampa arcivescovo; nuova edizione riveduta e corretta, Bologna, Tipografia Arcivescovile, 1897.

Even over the distance of centuries, the nuptial spirituality, so typically Merician, had still kept its priority. The changes which had taken place within the historical and social context had made no erosion in the ideal of life which Angela Merici had proposed to the Brescian virgins, and which Paleotti had endeavoured to transfer to the Rules of 1608.

And so for three centuries, the members of the Company of Bologna had remained faithful to their own diocesan Rule, when suddenly

they found themselves faced with something new.

The turning-point had its origin in an apparently simple matter, a discussion about the dress worn by the virgins. We will let the director of the Company tell the story himself;<sup>108</sup> he was discussing the subject with his local ordinary, Mgr Giacomo Della Chiesa, who had taken possession of the diocese of Bologna on 23 February 1907: "Some of them think that it is more in accordance with the spirit of their institution to wear a dress, if not completely uniform, at least simple and austere; others though would like a greater freedom so that they may have, according to them, more opportunity of doing good". And he continued: "... not only are they assiduous at the monthly meetings, but they apply themselves zealously to works of charity; they devote themselves to teaching the catechism; they prepare the little girls for first communion and take care that these frequent the Holy Sacraments". 109

The archbishop replied that although there was "no obligation to wear a completely uniform habit", nevertheless it would be more suitable if "they also had some exterior sign as an expression of their com-

mon spirit".110

This is a summary of the archbishop's view on the subject:

"There are some who believe that a greater conformity to the secu-

108 Consigli e ricordi alla Congregazione delle Orsoline di Bologna, Bologna, Tipografia Arcivescovile, 1908. The dedication is by the director, Canon Pio Venturi.

110 The reply is on pages 9-15.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., pp.5-7: "Alcune pensano che, secondo lo spirito della loro istituzione, meglio convenga un modo di vestire, se non uniforme, almeno semplice e grave; altre invece amerebbero una maggior libertà per avere, secondo esse, più facilità di accesso a fare il bene"... "non solo sono assidue alle riunioni mensili, ma si esercitano ancora con zelo nelle opere di carità: esse si dedicano all'insegnamento del catechismo, si prestano a preparare le fanciulle alla prima comunione, ed hanno cura che queste frequentino i Santi Sacramenti".

lar habit would make it easier for the Ursulines to have access to people in the world, and thus also make it easier for them to do good. But experience of what usually happens in the world convinces me that those who argue in this way are gravely mistaken; I would even say more: a style of dress conforming to what lay and secular women wear could result in the inference that the spirit of certain Ursulines is no different from the secular spirit of women who live in the world.... For all these reasons, it is preferable, in my opinion, that the Ursulines, as virgins and spouses of Jesus Christ, keep the habit which by its simplicity and sobriety is distinctive from that of the women of the world; because it is better that they should be taken for religious than suspected of being women who have fashionable clothes and costumes".111

This letter of Archbishop Della Chiesa was dated 28 August 1908. We did not look for the relevant documents following on from this episode, because the question of the habit was not of particular interest to us. We came across the subject again, though, when we were trying to reconstruct the history of the Regola of Bologna.

It was precisely to "have some information about the dress worn by the Ursulines" that Canon Pio Venturi, director of the Company, went to Brescia in 1916, where he met Maddalena Girelli. And it was certainly then - if he had not already heard about it - that he learnt that the Company of Brescia had "found" the "primitive Rule" of St Angela and had adopted it after having made a few necessary changes to it. Actually, it was the Brescian Rule reformed with the approval of St Charles and reprinted in the edition prepared by Cristoni in 1673. But Don Venturi had come back from his journey convinced that Brescia was following the Foundress' authentic teaching. And he must have spoken about this, because he wrote in a letter to Maddalena on 16 July 1918: "There is at present, among the Ursulines of Bologna, a strong movement in favour of adopting the primitive Rule".112

From that time onwards, some pieces of the Verzeri-Girelli corre-

forte corrente che vorrebbe si accettasse la Regola primitiva".

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., pp.12-13: "Vi ha chi crede che una maggior conformità all'abito secolaresco faciliterebbe alle Orsoline l'accesso alle persone del mondo, e quindi anche la maniera di fare del bene; ma l'esperienza di ciò che suole accadere nel mondo mi assicura che cade in grosso equivoco chi ragiona nell'indicata maniera; che anzi una foggia di vestire conforme agli abiti delle donne laiche o secolari potrebbe far argomentare che anche lo spirito di certe Orsoline non fosse difforme dallo spirito secolaresco delle donne che vivono nel mondo... Per tutti questi motivi io opino essere meglio che l'abito delle Orsoline, quali vergini e spose di Gesù Cristo, si mantenga per la sua semplicità e serietà distinto da quello delle donne del mondo, essendo preferibile che sieno sospettate monache, piuttosto che possano essere sospettate donne che abbiano vesti e costumi secolareschi".

112 Brescia, Archivio in Casa S. Angela: "Ora si è formata fra le attuali Orsoline di Bologna una

spondence which we examined speak about one aim in view: the adoption of the "primitive Rule" by the Company of Bologna and, following on from this, making the customs regarding dress in Bologna conform with those in Brescia.

Meanwhile, Cardinal Della Chiesa had been elected to the pontifical throne on 3 September 1914 and the coronation ceremony had taken place three days later. That does not appear to have made any great change in Venturi's relations with Della Chiesa, who had now become Benedict XV. This is proved by the fact that he consulted the latter again on the question of the habit; but it is more than likely that he also spoke to him about the existence in Brescia of the "primitive Rule". In a letter to Maddalena Girelli he says in fact: "The practical steps taken immediately after my journey to Brescia have been most successful; and the Holy Father, following the report which I sent him, has deigned to write himself to the Ursulines of Bologna a precious autographed letter, advising them to conform to the customs of Brescia regarding dress". 112b

In the same letter, Venturi asked for "four copies of the Regola primitiva, if it has been reprinted; and if it has not been, would it be possible to have at least one copy of it to show to the Cardinal Archbishop, who wants to see a reform of the Ursulines of Bologna take place?". 112c

What was assumed to be the primitive Rule in use at Brescia became widely used as the news of its "authenticity" gradually spread; this made the Companies want to adopt it so that they could live according to what they believed was the true text dictated by the Foundress.

On 22 July 1918, Maddalena Girelli replied to the request which Venturi had just made; "I am very happy that the practical steps taken have met with the warm approval of the Holy Father, and that he has deigned, by a precious autographed letter, to approve what is being done at Brescia with regard to the habit of the Daughters of St Angela. I hope the dissenters will conform to the decision of the Holy Father". She then concluded the letter with a point which would not have been lost on the virgins of Bologna: "It must also be noted that only those who observe the primitive Rule can participate in the indulgences granted to the Company".113

112c "n. 4 copie della Regola primitiva (se è stata ristampata); se poi non è stata ristampata, sarebbe possibile averne almeno una copia da presentare al signor Cardinale Arcivescovo, il quale vuole che si venga ad una riforma delle Orsoline di Bologna?".

113 Bologna, Archivio Compagnia di S Orsola, copy from the original: "Sono ben lieta che le prati-

<sup>112</sup>b "Le pratiche avviate subito dopo la mia venuta a Brescia ebbero esito felice; e il Santo Padre, dietro alla relazione mandatagli, si degnò, per mezzo di un prezioso autografo, di consigliare le Orsoline di Bologna ad uniformarsi, in riguardo al vestito, a quelle di Brescia".

It is easy to understand why Venturi was able to write on 5 March 1919: "Our Archbishop has made up his mind to reform the Ursulines of Bologna according to the primitive Rule ... We would like to have a copy of the Rule which Rev. Father Gio. Maria Cristoni, defender of the integrity of the Rule of St Angela, had reprinted. We would like the Archbishop to look at it, and we will send it back if it is not possible to keep it"."

On 10 March, Maddalena replied by return of post: "As for the Rule reprinted by the Rev. Cristoni, it is *substantially* the same as the one which we have and which was *revised* and *approved* by the lamented Mgr Verzeri, bishop of Brescia, when he restored the Company in 1866, as can be seen in the Decree attached to the Rule. In the Rule which Fr Cristoni gave to be printed, there are some differences in what is put down about the *places* where meetings were held, as the city was at that time divided into *Districts*; and the Offices of the Assistants (as today) were *divided* into Mistress, Protectresses etc. And these were all *faithfully regrouped* in the Chapter about the Assistants. I have *one copy* of it which I dare not risk sending by post given that so many things go astray, etc.". <sup>115</sup>

Maddalena Girelli appealed to the Decree of approval. It would be interesting to surmise what Venturi's reactions were when he began to consider the implications of that "Decree of canonical Erection of the Company of the Immaculate with the true Rule of St Angela Merici promulgated by His Excellency, the Rev. Mgr Girolamo Verzeri, bishop of Brescia", under which title it was printed in the Rule. Nor do we know what sense he would have made of certain words in the Decree itself, as for example: "the confraternity or company, founded by the

che avviate presso il Santo Padre abbiano avuto esito felice e si sia degnato, con prezioso autografo, di approvare quanto si fa a Brescia, riguardo all'abito delle Figlie di S. Angela. Spero che le dissidenti si uniformeranno alla decisione del Santo Padre"... "Faccio anche notare che tutte le indulgenze, concesse alla Compagnia, vi partecipano solo quelle che osservano la primitiva Regola".

Brescia, Archivio in Casa S. Angela: "Il nostro Arcivescovo si è già determinato alla riforma delle Orsoline di Bologna secondo la Regola primitiva... Si desidera di avere una copia della Regola fatta ristampare dal rev.do padre Gio. Maria Cristoni, difensore della integrità della Regola di S. Angela. Si vorrebbe farla osservare all'Arcivescovo, e poscia rispedirla se non si può rilasciare".

Bologna, Archivio Compagnia di S. Orsola, copy from the original: "Quanto alla Regola fatta ristampare dal R. Cristoni è precisa nella sostanza di quella che ora abbiamo, riveduta ed approvata dal compianto mons. Verzeri vescovo di Brescia, quando ha ripristinato la Compagnia nel 1866, come si vede nel Decreto unito alla Regola. Nella Regola fatta stampare dal P. Cristoni, vi sono diverse disposizioni circa i luoghi dove si tenevano le congregazioni essendo allora la città divisa in Quadri; e gli Uffici delle Assistenti (come ora) erano divisi in Maestra, Protettrici ect. E tutte queste furono riunite fedelmente nel Capo delle Assistenti. Ne tengo una copia che non arrischio a mandare per posta, ora tanto frequenti gli smarrimenti, ect.".

blessed St Angela Merici, which has now been started under the title and

the patronage of the most Holy Mary Immaculate".

On 14 December 1919, however, the bishop of Bologna, Mgr Giorgio Gusmini, nominated as Della Chiesa's successor on 8 September 1914, for the first time distributed to the virgins of the Company of Bologna " the primitive Rule of the holy Foundress, as has been done at Brescia and at Milan" 116

And Maddalena made the comment: "As for me ... I rejoice over the good news of the Company of Bologna. May St Angela obtain for

everyone a full and just understanding of the Holy Rule".117

During the summer of 1922, Venturi must have found some more questions of a practical nature to ask regarding the participation of the virgins in processions, with some distinctive sign to show that they belonged to the Company; also regarding the subject of indulgences. This can be deduced from Maddalena's response dated 20 August: "Here are my replies to your queries. All the indulgences and papal approvals are really only given to those who observe the primitive Rule; this Rule gives no directive about processions ...". 118

The Ursulines of Bologna had accepted courageously and in all good faith the idea of taking up again, in their daily life, the primitive Rule of their Mother, of renouncing the Rule of Paleotti which they had followed and loved over three centuries. But it was only when Turlino's printed edition of the Regola was circulated that the Company of Bologna would actually have in hand at last the Rule of the Foundress, the one which the first daughters of Angela had used.

## d) The Rule of Milan

From the beginning of his government as archbishop of the Ambrosian diocese, Charles Borromeo had given proof of his clarity of thought by the way he put affairs in order and by his gifts of organisation, his intuition of what had to be done by what he actually achieved, and his juridical sense which he owed to his curial training. All these

<sup>116</sup> Brescia, Archivio in Casa S. Angela, letter of Pio Venturi dated 7 December 1919: "... la Regola

primitiva della santa Fondatrice, come si è fatto a Brescia e a Milano".

117 Bologna, Archivio Compagnia di S. Orsola, letter of 10 December 1919, copy from the original: "Eccomi ... a consolarmi delle buone nuove della Compagnia di Bologna. Sant'Angela ottenga a tutte la piena e giusta intelligenza della Santa Regola".

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., letter of 20 August 1922; copy from the original: "Eccomi a dare risposta alle di lei domande: veramente tutte le indulgenze e approvazioni papali sono date a quelle che osservano la primitiva Regola; la quale non dà alcun indirizzo per le processioni...".

qualities, together with the pastoral concern of the Saint, resulted in Bor-

romeo's establishing the Company of St Ursula at Milan. 119

In 1566, Father Francesco Landini<sup>120</sup> had sent to Milan the text of the Rule which Angela Merici had intended for the virgins of Brescia. But this text could not have met with the cardinal's approval, or perhaps simply did not respond adequately to his plan or that of the curial officer charged with carrying it out. The fact remains that it was another Rule which was drawn up, a

- Regola della Compagnia di Santa Orsola fatta per quelle giovani, le quali desiderano servire a Dio nel stato verginale, stando nel secolo; e per quelle, le quali per povertà, o per altri impedimenti non possono entrare in Monasterii. Aggiontovi i capitoli del Governo, che hanno di havere i Governatori, e Governatrici di essa Compagnia. Con licentia dell'Illustriss. et Reverendiss. Sig. Cardinale Borromeo, Arcivescovo di Milano. In Milano, appresso di Giovan Battista et fratelli da Ponte alla Dovana, 1567.121

It is clear that the legislator wanted to make a distinction between the "Rule" and the "Chapters on the Government" which form a separate section after the Rule.

This Rule of Milan is a collection of practical rules which follow one after the other in a very arid way without any breath of spirituality to transform them, with the exception of the last paragraph of the "Government" addressed to the matrons: "Finally, they should know how to be like mothers to them, so that they will have as much concern for them as if they were their own daughters, and even more, because they are their mothers in Jesus Christ and through Jesus Christ, whose spouses these virgins are". 122

Angela's Rule also put forward some disciplinary rules, but the "Madre" had justified them by appealing not only to the principles of Christian living but also to those which belong to the life totally consecrated to Christ, the life based on a nuptial relationship constantly borne in mind.

The editor of the Milanese Rule must have had in hand, however, the manuscript sent by Father Landini, as he had taken some of the regula-

120 LOMBARDI, Vita, op. cit., pp.197-199.

ASDM, Sezione XII, Ordini Religiosi e Congregazioni, vol.145. For the editions of 1569, 1570,

1577, 1582 (in the Atti Sinodali) and 1585, cf. supra, Pt.I, Ch.II, 1.a.

<sup>119</sup> For the Company of Milan, cf. GUALBERTO VIGOTTI, S. Carlo Borromeo e la Compagnia di S. Orsola. Nel centenario della ricostituzione in Milano della Compagnia di S. Orsola Figlie di S. Angela Merici (1872-1972), Milano 1972.

<sup>122</sup> Regola, Milano 1567, f.[12v]: "Finalmente sappiano esser loro come madri, per il che ne habbiano tal cura, come di proprie figliuole, anzi maggiore, essendo loro madri in Christo, e per Christo, del qual queste vergini sono spose".

tions about dress from it and also some about contacts with the world.

Certain expressions may give one an unpleasant surprise, as for example what is said regarding the agreement between superiors and parents about the admission of the virgin: "The Prior will make [the parents] understand that the Virgins must always remain with them at home, be fed and clothed by them"; 123 or, with regard to poverty and this is perhaps the most disconcerting example: "The virgins, remembering the poverty of their spouse Jesus Christ, should be satisfied with whatever the divine goodness allows them, whether it is little or much. This is why they should on no account, out of greed for gain, work on feast-days; and if they should be obliged to do so out of necessity, they should ask permission of the confessor. They should not go begging in the city; they should not resort to lies or pretences to gain alms; they should receive nothing from the sisters without permission of the confessor, so that the latter are not forced to steal something from their family in order to give it to them; but they should let their matrons know what their needs are. And if it should happen that a person who is obliged to leave them something, such as father, mother and other relatives, is on the point of dying, they should alert the governors about it".124

No comments are needed here to draw attention to the abyss which separates this way of looking at poverty from that total poverty, effective and above all affective, which Angela had demanded from the virgins of the Company. What we have here at Milan is the kind of regulations which could belong to any one of the numerous pious associations of good Christians which existed at that time, except for the commitment to perpetual chastity.

On this precise point, incidentally, an innovation made its appearance: the express permission to pronounce the vow of chastity for those who so desired. But the tone in which it is expressed is dry, purely rational: "Of those who enter this Company, it is expected that they have the intention of [keeping] chastity.... They should know, however, that this proposal of chastity must not be understood as a vow, that it does

123 Ibid., f.[7r]: "il Priore farà intendere che le Vergine haveranno sempre da star con loro in casa,

e da loro doveranno esser pasciute e vestite".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, ff.[7v-8r]: "Le vergini, ricordevoli della povertà del loro sposo Giesù Christo, si contentino di quel poco o assai che la divina bontà concedarà loro. Per il che, per l'ingordigia del guadagno, per nissuno modo lavorino la festa, e se la necessità le stringesse, prendano licenza del confessore. Non vadano mendicando per la città, né con bugie o simulationi procurino elemosine, né ricevano cosa alcuna dalle sorelle senza licenza del confessore, acciò non robbino alli suoi per darlo a loro, ma di tutti i suoi bisogni ne avisino le governatrici. Accadendo voglia morir alcuno che sia tenuto lassare loro alcuna cosa, come padre, madre et altri suoi parenti, ne avisino i governatori".

not have the force of a vow, either private or solemn, unless they make it expressly or have already done so. And in the case that someone wants to make the vow of chastity, she should not be in a hurry to do it, knowing that it is better not to make the vow than, having made it, not to keep it". 125

How remote this is from the sober, but forceful, language of Angela! She did not raise the question of the vow but demanded a total interior virginity, with the whole of one's being constantly turned towards God, stretched out towards God in a gesture of never-ending love, the bride turning to her Beloved.

Special attention must be drawn to one of the chapters because of the novelty of its contents and because of its later repercussions. It comes into the pastoral programme which enabled Charles Borromeo to speed up and to carry through the reform of his diocese. It concerns Chapter XI: "What they should do on feast-days. On feast-days, they should hear mass and sermon; in addition to this, they should always seek to occupy themselves with pious exercises, such as reading, meditating and praying and in particular they should go to the Schools of Christian Doctrine, and there they should practise teaching or learning what is taught and learnt there. And while they are there, they should not only occupy themselves with this exercise, but with ever greater charity, they should always encourage the others to frequent the holy Sacraments, and to attract them to this Company". 126

The virgins of the Company had thus found their own specific apostolic calling: the teaching of Christian doctrine, in so far as they were trained for it, accompanied by words of faith and encouragement which would draw others to want to share in the same ideal of virginal consecration to Christ. Knowingly or otherwise, the legislator was following the example given by Angela who herself had been a mistress of faith and who, in her relations with others, had always sought to make known "the Almighty God" and to make him loved.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., f.[6v]: "Da quelle che entrano in questa Compagnia si ricerca che habbino proposito di virginità... Sappiano, però, che tal proposito di verginità non s'intende esser voto, né haver virtù di voto, né privato né solenne, salvo se elle espressamente non lo facessero o non l'havessero già fatto. Et in caso che alcuna desiderasse di far voto di verginità, non sia precipitosa a farlo, sapendo esser meglio non far il voto che, fatto, non servarlo...".

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., f.[8r]: "In che si hanno da essercitare le feste. Nelli giorni di festa, oltre l'udire messa e predica, cerchino sempre di occuparsi in essercitii pii, come leggere, meditar et orare, e specialmente in andare alle Scuole della Dottrina Christiana, et ivi essercitarsi ad insegnare, o ad imparare ciò che ivi s'insegna et impara. Et essendo ivi, non solo attendano a tal essercitio, ma estendendo la carità, cerchino sempre di essortare l'altre a frequentare i santi Sacramenti, et a tirarle in questa Compagnia".

Taken as a whole, though, the Rule of Milan does not have its own special spirituality. 127

Another big difference when this Rule is compared with the Merician Rule then in force in Brescia concerns the structure of the government. At Brescia, this was above all in the hands of the mother general who governed with the virgin-colonelle and the matrons; 128 at Milan, it was primarily in the hands of the prior general, special priors, governors and – finally – lady-governors: "Given the extent of the city of Milan, it has been judged expedient, for the greater convenience of the virgins, to establish several Companies, assigning to each one its own particular government; a certain number of good priests will be elected, therefore, one of whom will be the prior general; the others will be the special priors for each Company. In addition, for the temporal government there will be elected a sufficient number of suitable men and women, that is gentlemen and widows of good birth, and these, assigned to the various Companies as good fathers and mothers, will govern the virgins according to their office". 129

This prescription certainly fits in with Cardinal Borromeo's scheme to involve as many clergy as possible in the pastoral work, by identifying the Church with the hierarchy and by relegating the laity to the role of being administered to. This transfer of the authority of the "lady-governors" to the clergy confirms the divergence between the authentic Company of Brescia and the Company of Milan.

The first edition of the Regola made no reference to the Brescian Foundress; but with the next and subsequent ones, the text of the Rule was followed by the Estratto d'una lettera del P. Francesco, che sta nel Monte vicino a Brescia, scritta al R.P. Frate Franceschino Visdomini, adì 21 dicembre 1566. It was a kind of justice rendered to Angela; one certainly could not

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>127</sup> This could also be said about the Rule sent to the publishers in 1585 by the vicar-general Giovanni Fontana and intended "Alle divote vergini di S. Orsola della Città et diocese di Milano". This Rule had been found among the papers of Cardinal Borromeo, but that does not mean that he was responsible for it. The spiritual dryness which characterises the collection of minute prescriptions which make up the Rule certainly does not bear the imprint of a Saint. It is entitled: Regola generale per tutte quelle vergini della Compagnia di S. Orsola. Le quali si sono retirate a vivere in Congregatione, in Milano, appresso Pacifico Pontio, 1585.

<sup>128</sup> Cf. supra, Pt.II, Ch.VIII, 3.
129 Regola, Milano 1567, f.[9r]: "Essendo la città di Milano molto grande, per maggiore commodità delle vergini si è pensato esser espediente fondare parecchie Compagnie, assignando a ciascuna il suo particolare governo; per lo quale si eleggerà un numero di buoni sacerdoti, de quali uno sarà priore generale, e gli altri saranno priori particolari di ciascuna Compagnia. Di più, per il governo temporale si eleggerà un numero sufficiente di huomini e donne da bene, cioè gentil'huomini e gentildonne vedove, quali, distribuiti per ciascuna Compagnia, a guisa di buoni padri e madri, governaranno secondo il suo officio le vergini".

make her responsible for the Rule of Milan, but at least one had to attribute to her the idea of a Company of virgins living in the world under the title of St Ursula.

On the frontispiece of the 1570 edition is an engraving, 27 x 19mm; finely drawn, it represents a young virgin, kneeling, hands joined together, in front of Christ on the cross. A rounded arch frames the cross, and in the background are depicted the countryside and high mountains. The virgin has a halo: would this perhaps be a homage to Angela, that "quasi reputata Beata" Angela about whom Father Francesco Landini speaks in his letter to Father Visdomini?

The 1585 edition, the sixth which we know, contains two additions: Gregory XIII's Brief with a "Sommario" which explains, in Italian, the contents (and which later would also be inserted in the Rule of Ferrara translated in France and then printed at Tournon), and a Ceremonial. This Ceremonial consisted of two parts: Forma di cerimonie da usare quando le vergini si velano e si accettano nella Compagnia di S. Orsola, and Forma di cerimonie da usar quando le vergini della Compagnia di S. Orsola si stabiliscono, in other words when they were finally admitted as members of the institution.

This Ritual is very rich in highly evocative symbolic gestures, as for example the imposition of the veil or the triple invitation to approach the altar: "Audi, filia, et vide... Prudens virgo, surge et orna lampadem tuam... Veni de Libano, sponsa Dei...", with the triple response: "Unde hoc mihi, ut invenirem gratiam ante oculos Dei mei...? Domine, oleum effusum nomen tuum, da mihi de oleo tuo, ut ornem lampadem meam... Ecce, venio ad te, dulcissime Domine, quia vocasti me; suscipe me secundum eloquium tuum...".

Then, in the course of a biblically inspired dialogue, the celebrant hands to the virgin the veil, a lighted candle and a lily; he next places a crown on her head. The antiphon sung by the crowned virgin translates the interior joy experienced by this nuptial celebration: "Ipsi sum sponsata cui Angeli serviunt, cuius pulchritudinem sol et luna mirantur. Ipsi soli servo fidem, ipse me tota devotione committo. Videte, vos omnes quae timetis Deum, quanta fecit Dominus animae meae". And the choir echoes this: "Quae est ista, quae ascendit de deserto, deliciis affluens, innixa super dilectum suum?". 131

131 Regola, Milano 1585, f.20v.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>130</sup> In the manifesto printed for the occasion at Milan "Per Michel Tini, 1583", the Brief was followed by the "Sommario delle sodette Lettere Apostoliche" which carried the signature of M. Antonius Bellinus, Cancell. Archiep.

In this way the Ceremonial restored the value and the awareness of that nuptial relationship which was at the heart of Merician spirituality, but which the Legislator had not known how to inject into the chapters

of the Regola.

We do not know the identity of this Legislator. Nothing, in any of the editions of this Rule which we examined, has thrown any light on the author, no dedication, no preface, no indication of any kind. There is not even a Decree of approval in it, with the exception of Gregory XIII's Brief published in the 1585 edition. Regarding the diocesan authority, there is nothing. The expression "con licenza del cardinal Borromeo" does not mean that the cardinal had drawn up the Rule; it does not have the value of a signature. In the 1585 frontispiece it simply says: "La qual Compagnia e Regola... è stata instituta et approbata dall'Ill.mo e Reverendiss. Cardinal di Santa Prassede arcivescovo di Milano".

## e) "Rule" and Rules

When Bishop Paleotti, in his Governo archiepiscopale in Bologna, drew up a note concerning young women who voluntarily embraced chastity while living in the world, he was only expressing something which was of great concern to him as a pastor: "It would be necessary also to establish a Congregation under the name of St Ursula, or of Charity, or some other name, with good rules for the young girls who do not want to get married or cannot enter religious life, and yet desire to serve God in a chaste life, as is being done at Milan, at Verona, and in other big towns". 132

It was the same concern that had made Cardinal Borromeo, once he became archbishop of Milan, decide to make enquiries immediately about the Brescian institution which had really been the first to offer a solution to this problem, a problem which certainly was a religious one, but with social and profoundly human overtones.

Having thus established the Company of St Ursula at Milan and taken note of its beneficial influence in the local Church, Charles Borromeo had not hesitated to extend it, recommending its introduction in all

the dioceses he visited in his role of apostolic visitor.

The cardinal's prestige, his authority and the delicate nature of the situation in itself could not fail to find the bishops open to the search for a solution.

But the primitive Company of St Ursula had been the fruit of the

charismatic intuition of a Saint, whose aim had been to foster the meeting between Christ and the bride. Outside Brescia, this intuition would take concrete form in similar or analogous institutions, sometimes with rules more or less directly inspired by the Merician model, but also sometimes with very different rules and with a completely different spirit.

And so, in several Italian dioceses there arose forms of feminine consecrated life, of an associative (or corporative) nature. They came into being and were known under a variety of names or, sometimes, by the same name but with their own Rule and characteristics according to local circumstances; they were usually the work of founders who claimed the right to make new legislation. The modest dress of their members, their humble and reserved behaviour, as well as their discreet attitude soon earned for them the nickname of "dimesse".

"Dimesse" – this was the name given likewise at a later date to the virgins of the Company of St Ursula, as is proved by the *Trattato breve del modo del santo vivere che tener debbe una virgine posta nello stato delle Demesse* which Tribesco dedicated "Alla reverenda nobile et devota Madre della Compagnia di S. Orsola nella magnifica città di Brescia, la signora Anna Iesuppina". <sup>133</sup>

The term "dimesse" thus became a very common one; it could lead therefore to some confusion, from the point of view of historical reconstruction, if this fact were not taken into consideration.

The Company of the "Dimesse" at Vicenza

Here is a case where one of the associative forms of secular virgins could raise some questions; with its insistence on nuptial spirituality, one may wonder if it has links with the Company founded by Angela Merici or with the Companies closely connected with it. We are speaking about the Company of the "Dimesse" founded at Vicenza in 1579.

Placed "under the glorious standard of the most pure Virgin Mother of God", these "Dimesse" led a community life, living together in groups of eight or nine members at the most; they followed a Rule 134 which had been dictated by their founder, the Ven. Father Antonio Pa-

134 Gli Ordini della divota Compagnia delle Dimesse, che vivono sotto il nome et la protettione della purissima Madre di Dio Maria Vergine. In Venetia, 1587. Appresso Domenico Nicolini. Bergamo, Biblioteca

Civica, Cinq. 4.35.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>133</sup> GIACOMO TRIBESCO, Trattato breve del modo del santo vivere che tener debbe una virgine posta nello stato delle Demesse. Composto per il R.P.D. Giacomo Tribesco Bresciano Can. Reg. Lat. Distinto in quattro capitoli. Con una santa essortatione dopoi li Capitoli dal Autore gionti. In Padova, appresso Lorenzo Pasquati Impressor de l'Alma Università de' Legisti, 1589. Anna di Usupini had been elected on 15 November 1583 (SLG, f.57v).

gani, Friar Minor of the Observance, a well-known figure of the Catholic Reformation.<sup>135</sup>

In their Rule there is no reference at all to the foundation of Angela Merici. Furthermore, it indirectly highlights its own difference when it deals with the pious works to which the superior can send the "dimesse" of Vicenza: "to go every month to the women's hospitals", "on feast-days, to teach Christian doctrine or go to the Company of St Ursula ...".<sup>136</sup>

In spite of an undeniable affinity on the spiritual level, the Company of the Dimesse at Vicenza was not therefore a Company of St Ursula.

In 1747 at Bergamo, Father Gallarati had the Rule of these "Dimesse di Maria Vergine" printed for the house at Bergamo where already the number of possible members had risen to forty. But this Rule was no longer the same: the mystical spirit of the former had been watered down, the formal character proper to the congregations had been accentuated and the language of exhortation had been replaced by a normative language.

#### The "Dimesse" of Venice

Cardinal Agostino Valiero, bishop of Verona and Venetian, had a sister who was a "dimessa" at Venice. He wrote a short tract for her in 1577 on the Modo di vivere proposto alle Vergini che si chiaman Dimesse". 138

It is clear that, in his view, the "dimessa" is a virgin who has made a promise of perpetual chastity while still remaining in the secular state, but without any reference to a definite associative structure.

In Venice at that time, the "sorelle in Cristo e compagne in questa santa vita" were already quite numerous ("non piccol numero"); <sup>139</sup> the rules suggested by Valiero in his tract do not mention, however, any definite link between them, no meeting for example, no celebration, no group structure. From this fact one can deduce that "madonna Donata Valiera" did not belong to any organised "Compagnia di Dimesse", but only to a certain group of faithful souls. With his sister in mind, the car-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>135</sup> Cf. Dizionario degli Istituti di Perfezione, op. cit., vol.VI, article "Pagani Antonio"; vol.III, article "Dimesse della Madonna".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>136</sup> Gli Ordini della divota Compagnia delle Dimesse, op. cit., p.13; and p.3 "venendo il caso che esso reverendissimo monsignor ordinasse la Compagnia di S. Orsola".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>137</sup> Gli Ordini della divota Compagnia delle Dimesse. Che vivono sotto il nome e protezione della purissima Madre di Dio Maria Vergine. Disposti già con più brevità e chiarezza per facilitarne l'osservanza dal P. Ambrogio Gallarati della Compagnia di Gesù l'anno 1744 [this should read 1704]. E ora la prima volta per vie maggior comodo e frutto dati alla luce. In Bergamo, 1747. Appresso Pietro Lancellotti. Bergamo, Biblioteca dei Preti del Sacro Cuore.

<sup>138</sup> VALIERO, Modo di vivere, op. cit.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., p.2.

dinal wrote: "Your state [of Dimessa] is very pleasing to the Lord God, and His Divine Majesty takes great delight in the resolution which you have taken to serve him, as you will be able to do in many ways outside the monastery. And this kind of virgins, servants of God, who in certain towns are called Companions of the blessed Company of St Ursula, who in others are given the name of the Company of the Madonna and who are also known by the name of Dimesse, this kind of virgins bears great fruit in God's Church". 140

That it is not a question here of any Company, either of St Ursula or of the Madonna, appears clear in the chapter on the Eucharist: "And I would fully approve if [the Dimessa] received the most Holy Sacrament with her Dimesse sisters, providing there is in the city some holy Company, either of St Ursula or of the Madonna; and if there is none there, she may receive Holy Communion in her parish or wherever the Holy Spirit may inspire her to receive it". 141

Moreover, while the cardinal exhorted her to do some good reading, suggesting for example the biographies of St Catherine and of St Lucy, he did not mention the one of St Ursula; he did not even remember "the treatise about Virgins of Denis the Carthusian, newly translated in the vulgar tongue", which the Rule of the Company of St Ursula at

Milan had recommended reading.142

Mention of the "Compagnia della Madonna" certainly cannot refer to that of the "Dimesse of the Madonna" which would only be founded by Father Pagani two years later (about 1579); we do not know which other one Valiero could have been referring to.

We will find a Company of the Madonna, though, at Cremona.

## The "Company" of Cremona

The first "Company" of consecrated virgins outside the diocese of Brescia seems to have been that of Cremona; but even though it had the title of Company of St Ursula from the beginning, it had no ties with the Merician institution.

141 Ibid., p.24: "E lauderei che [la Dimessa] pigliasse il Santissimo Sacramento colle sorelle sue Dimesse, se però nella città si trovano alcune sante Compagnie, o di Santa Orsola o della Madonna; e se non vi si trovano, potrà comunicarsi nella parrocchia sua, ovvero sarà ispirata dallo Spirito Santo."

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., pp.8-9: "lo stato vostro è gratissimo al Signor Dio, e Sua Divina Maestà si compiace mirabilmente della risoluzione che avete fatto di servirlo, come potete fare in molte maniere fuora del monistero. È in verità questa sorte di vergini, serve di Dio, che in alcune città si chiamano Compagne della benedetta Compagnia di Sant'Orsola, in alcune altre si nominano della Compagnia della Madonna, e con altro nome si dicono Dimesse, è molto fruttuosa nella Chiesa di Dio".

<sup>142</sup> Regola, Milano 1567 and the following ones, Ch.8.

The Chroniques de l'Ordre des Ursulines 143 relate that on 17 January 1565, when Nicolò Sfondrati was bishop of Cremona, Father Giovanni Scotti, a Somaschan, established the Company of St Ursula, giving it a Rule written by himself. We searched in vain, including among the Historical Archives of the Somaschan Fathers, for the manuscript of this Rule mentioned in the Chroniques, nor were we able to find a printed copy of it.

We know there was a "new edition", printed in 1616 under the title of Regola della Compagnia delle figliuole della Madonna Santissima. 144 But this was an edition revised by Mgr Giovan Battista Brivio, made from a pre-

vious revision undertaken by Bishop Cesare Speciano in 1605.

We do not have this 1605 edition, but Mgr Brivio reproduced the preface of it in his 1616 edition. Speciano had written: "I have felt obliged as part of my pastoral duty to introduce this holy initiative into our city of Cremona, so that it may not be deprived of the splendour and glory which adorn and bring lustre to so many other cities. And because this blessed Congregation has different names in various cities, according to the devotion of whoever imposes it, it seems good to us, after mature reflexion, to call this Company of Cremona the *Compagnia delle figliuole o vergini della Madonna*". <sup>145</sup>

This then was a type of Company of St Ursula, born with its own Rule, which would eventually be known as the Company of the Daughters of the Madonna.

According to what Brivio wrote in the revised 1616 edition, he had been asked by "the Ladies of the government" to "kindly revise the Rules and to put things more clearly than they had been at the beginning, adding to it the instructions promised in the Rule", 146 and this he

marla la Compagnia delle figliuole o vergini della Madonna".

<sup>143</sup> Chroniques, op. cit., Première partie, p.34.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>144</sup> Regole della Compagnia delle figliuole della Madonna Santissima instituita da Monsignor Vescovo Speciano; e di nuovo reviste e stampate per ordine di Monsignor Illustriss. Gio. Batista Brivio Vescovo di Cremona, per la sua città et diocesi; In Cremona per gli Heredi di Barucino Zanni, 1616. Copy in the Biblioteca Statale of Cremona which was pointed out to us by Prof. M. Marcocchi as well as another edition: Regole della Compagnia delle figliuole della Madonna Santissima. Quali habitano nelle proprie case. Instituita da Monsig. Vescovo Cesare Speciano, confermate et fatte ristampare da Monsignor Vescovo Gio. Battista Brivio. Et hora di nuovo reviste et restampate con alcune agiunte. Per ordine di Monsig. Eminentiss. Sig. Cardinale Vescovo di Cremona Pietro Campori. Per la sua città et diocesi. In Cremona, 1634, per Gio. Pietro Zanni.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>145</sup> Ibid., pp.3-4: "Ci è parso obbligo della nostra cura pastorale introdurre questo santo instituto nella nostra città di Cremona, acciò non sii priva di quell'istesso splendore e gloria che adorna et illustra tante altre città. Et perché questa benedetta Congregatione ha in varie città diversi nomi, conforme alla divotione di chi ve l'impose, a noi con maturo conseglio è parso bene, questa di Cremona, chia-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, p.5: "dalle Signore del governo" ... "voler rivedere le Regole et mettere un poco più in chiaro le cose di quello che si sia potuto fare nel principio, aggiungendovi le instruttioni promesse nella Regola".

had willingly done. But it is impossible for us to state precisely what these revisions, clarifications and additions were in relation to the pre-

ceding edition of Speciano.

At any rate, the way in which this group of secular Ursulines at Cremona was established remains the oldest evidence we have, at least up to now, of the evolution of the Merician conception in the 16th century: the Company finished by appearing more as a solution to a socio-religious problem; and its characteristics, from the spiritual point of view, no longer bore the imprint of Angela Merici but that of the local founders.

## The "Company of St Ursula" at Naples

The Rule of the Company of St Ursula at Naples was probably derived from the primitive Rule which Father Scotti had dictated for the virgins of Cremona; it was introduced into Naples by another Somas-

chan, Father Giovanni Longo. 147

Giving high praise to the spiritual advantages procured by the Company of St Ursula, Father Longo wrote in the dedicatory letter: "And by divine favour, the spiritual fruit increases daily; and it is hoped that it [the Company] will go from strength to strength since it is under the direction of the very reverend Somaschan Fathers, first institutors and founders of this Company in the regions of Lombardy also. That is why I have asked for these Rules of Lombardy and the institutions made by the very reverend P.D. Giovanni Scotto, clerk regular of Somascha, to be sent here; they have been approved by numerous Bishops and Prelates in their cities.148

But Longo did not say to what use he had put Scotti's Rule nor how far he had been faithful to it. One thing is certain: in spite of the title, there is nothing Merician about this Company of St Ursula at Naples. The Company was intended primarily for the virgins and widows who wanted to live a life of virginity or perpetual chastity (the "stabilite"); however, it was open to all, with the result that by 1609 it already consisted of more than 1460 members - "women, virgins, widows and married, and men". 149 There is no mention of Angela Merici in

<sup>147</sup> Ordinationi et Regole della Compagnia di Santa Orsola. Novamente eretta nella chiesa di Santa Maria di Loreto di Napoli, fuori la Porta del Carmine. In Napoli, per Gio. Domenico Roncagliolo, 1609. AGUUR. Rb.27

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., pp.7-8: "Et si fa molto frutto spirituale di giorno in giorno, con il favor divino; et si spera che anderà sempre di bene in meglio, poiché si trova sotto il governo delli molto reverendi Padri di Somasca, primi institutori et fondatori di questa Compagnia anco nelle parti di Lombardia. Così ho fatto venire queste Regole et institutioni da Lombardia, fatte dal molto reverendo P.D. Giovanni Scotto clerico regolare di Somasca, et approvate da molti Vescovi et Prelati nelle loro città". 149 Ibid., p.7: "... maschi, e femine vergine, vedove e maritate".

the Rule, and even where some precept for the "stabilite" may appear to be inspired by the Merician Rule, the material object of the prescription has been emptied of its original sense and there is nothing left of the

authentic spirituality of the "Company of St Ursula".

The aims of the new association, in the order in which they were presented, were: to promote divine worship; to encourage the devotion of men and women; to support the welfare of all; to come to the aid of young virgins who, through poverty or infirmity, could not enter a convent; not to allow Naples to be excelled in this by other cities which, although less important, already had the Company of St Ursula.<sup>150</sup>

And so, if virginal consecration was no longer the principal end of the institution, the title of "Company of St Ursula" finished by representing a reality which did not correspond in any way with the Merician

conception.

## The "Company of the Virgins of St Ursula" at Modena

Concerning this Company of Modena (or Modona), the 1620 Rule is known, consisting of two parts, each with its own pagination and its own "imprimatur iterum". 151 There is no doubt that it is a reprint (or a new edition) of an earlier text. Paul V's Brief, granting some indulgences, mentioned on pages 137-141 of the first part, is dated 5 November 1605. The impossibility of comparing it with the first edition makes it difficult to identify the source it came from. Admittedly, there are a few phrases here and there which are reminiscent of Angela's Rule, but it has to be said that by that date, these expressions had entered into common use. It is only with great difficulty, though, that one can find Angela's spirituality in this Rule. Suffice it, for example, to take the respective chapters on virginity to reveal the basic difference between them. We know the Merician conception, totally interior and mystic, of virginal consecration. But we read in the Rule of Modena: "Holy virginity, marvellous ornament which is indeed the most noble form and soul of this Company in honour of which [virginity] it has been principally established ...". The Virgin, "being ... in the world in an unworldly way, makes herself wholly admirable to the entire Church". And the virgins "are so in love with it that ... nearly everyone spontaneously adds the private vow of virginity to the promise". 152 It could be said that virginity has be-

150 Ibid., pp.16-17.

152 Ibid., pp.14-16 passim: "La santa verginità, bellissimo ornamento, anzi come nobilissima forma et

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>151</sup> Regole della Compagnia delle Vergini di S.Orsola di Modona. Parte prima. In Modona, 1620. Per Giulian Cassiani. E seguita da Regole del Governo della Compagnia delle Vergini di S. Orsola di Modona. Parte seconda. In Modona, 1620. Per Giulian Cassiani. B.Vat. Racc.Gen.Dir.Can.VI.14.

come an end in itself and that the aim of everything is to preserve it.

At the same time it is interesting to note that the group of Modena has the form of a Company of virgins, and that it is "immediately governed, in perfect order, by various officers". These "should ordinarily be chosen from among the virgins".<sup>153</sup> If there were no suitable virgins, however, "the Company may accept and employ some widow-matrons, as a subsidiary group, to help it to carry the weight of government and to protect it with their authority".<sup>154</sup>

The acceptance of a widow is dependent on an edifying life, on the taking of the vow of perpetual chastity and on the frequentation of the Sacraments. The Mother will see moreover "if she is ready to obey the Company in the observance of its rules, about which she will see that she is well informed beforehand". If she meets all these conditions, a vote will be taken about accepting her at the next meeting of the members of the government, and if the vote is in favour, "her name will be written down in the general admission book, in the Second Part, separate from the virgins".<sup>155</sup>

But there will be no crowning ceremony for her.

\* \* \*

"Rule" and Rules: the former is the "holy, God-given Rule", 156 "which God in his grace has given to us", 157 the contents of which "were by the Holy Spirit, dictated through the intermediary of the Foundress"; 158 the latter are sometimes a re-elaboration of Angela Merici's original conception as interpreted by successive legislators, sometimes simply an adaptation carried out within a socio-religious context.

But the identity of the authentic Company of Saint Ursula is and remains the one which was consecrated by the Regola established by Angela Merici, that Rule of which the Trivulzian manuscript constitutes

today the oldest and the most important document.

153 Ibid., p.6: "immediatamente governata, con ordine bellissimo, da varie officiali". ... "ordinaria-

mente dovriano esser del numero delle vergini".

154 Ibid., p.7: "la Compagnia accetta e adopera matrone vedove, come banda sussidiaria, perché l'aiuti a portar il peso del governo, e con la sua autorità la protega".

155 Ibid., second part, p.27: "se sarà pronta ad obeddire alla Compagnia nell'osservanza de gli ordini suoi, de quali procurerà che sia prima bene informata". ... "si scriverà nel libro commune delle accettate, nella Seconda Parte, distintamente dalle vergini".

anima di questa Compagnia, ad honore della quale appunto principalmente è stata istituita...". ... "stando... nel mondo non mondanamente si rende ammirabile non poco a tutta Santa Chiesa". ... "talmente di quella s'innamorano, che... quasi tutte spontaneamente aggiongono al proposito il voto privato della verginità".

Ricordi, 7th Counsel.
Regola, Prologue.

<sup>158</sup> COZZANO, Dichiarazione, D24, [f.973v].

## DOCUMENTARY APPENDIX

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## **DOCUMENTS**

- 1. Regola codice Trivulziano (Trivulzian codex of Rule)
- 2. Regola edizione Turlino (Turlino edition of Rule)
- 3. Regola: codice Trivulziano e edizione Turlino (Rule: Trivulzian codex and Turlino edition)
- Ricordi (Counsels)
- 5. Testamento o Legati
  (Testament or Legacies)
- 6. Atto d'elezione di Angela Merici (Angela Merici's act of election)
- 7. Memoria della morte (Angela Merici's obituary notice)
- 8. Registrazione della supplica di Angela Merici (Transcription of Angela Merici's petition)
- 9. Lettera del Penitenziere Maggiore (Letter of the Grand Penitentiary)
- 10. Ufficio, corona, disciplina, cilicio: descrizione (Office, rosary, discipline, hair-shirt: description)
- 11. Ufficio, corona, disciplina, cilicio: donazione (Office, rosary, discipline, hair-shirt: donation)
- Antico sepolcreto di S. Angela (Ancient tomb of Saint Angela)
- 13. "Rasse" (Denunciations)
- 14. Dichiarazioni d'Estimo (Declarations of property)

- 15. Estratto d'una lettera del P. Francesco Landini (Extract from a letter of Fr Francesco Landini)
- Processo Nazari (Nazari Process)
- 17. Vita (Nazari's Life)
- 18. Bolla "Regimini Universalis Ecclesiae" (Bull "Regimini Universalis Ecclesiae")
- 19. Mandato esecutoriale (Executory mandate)
- 20. Processo esecutoriale (Executory process)
- 21. Autenticazione della trascrizione della Bolla (Authentication of the transcription of the Bull)
- 22. Epistola confortatoria (Cozzano's Letter of comfort to the virgins)
- 23. Risposta (Cozzano's Reply)
- 24. Dichiarazione della Bolla (Cozzano's Explanation of the Bull)
- Testimonianza di Giacomo Tribesco (Giacomo Tribesco's testimony)
- Atto d'elezione di Veronica Buzzi (Veronica Buzzi's act of election)
- Atto notarile 22 febbraio 1545
   (Notarial act of 22 February 1545)
- 28. Atto notarile 23 novembre 1555 (Notarial act of 23 November 1555)
- 29. Atto notarile 18 settembre 1556 (Notarial act of 18 September 1556)
- Atto notarile 31 maggio 1558
   (Notarial act of 31 May 1558)
- 31. Atto notarile 31 luglio 1558 (Notarial act of 31 July 1558)
- 32. Testamento di Ginevra Luzzago (Will of Ginevra Luzzago)
- 33. Atto notarile 19 novembre 1559 (Notarial act of 19 November 1559)

- 34. Piccolo Ufficio di S. Orsola (Little Office of Saint Ursula)
- 35. Iconografia mericiana a Desenzano e Verona (Merician iconography at Desenzano and Verona)
- 36. Iconografia mericiana a Brescia (Merician iconography at Brescia)
- 37. Sommario addizionale (Summarium Additionale)

NB. The Documentary Appendix is the same as the one in the Italian edition; some adaptations are pointed out as and when necessary.

# 1. Regola codice trivulziano

Milano, Biblioteca Trivulziana, codice 367, scaff.le n. 82, palch.to n. 2. Già n. 342. Inedito. Cfr. supra, parte I, cap. I, 3.a.

## [Carta con note d'Archivio]

Questa Regola della Compagnia di S. Orsola è quella fatta dalla Ven. Angela Merici da Brescia, e confermata dal Vescovo di Brescia l'anno 1536, 8 agosto. E questa Ven. Angela era morta già l'anno 1545, ricavando ciò dalla Regola di queste vergini, revista e corretta da S. Carlo Borromeo, Visitatore Apostolico della Chiesa di Brescia. Quali Regole reviste sono stampate in Brescia del 1582, appresso Pietro Maria Marchetti. Ma in questa manuscritta vi sono molte diferenze dalla stampata, ed ha del merito per la semplicità, santità con cui è fatta, scorgendosi in essa la buontà di detta Ven. Angela.

[altra mano]

Di più, nel nostro aureo libro «Acta Mediolanensis Ecclesiae» della prima edizione 1582, a fol. 338, doppo la Regola della Compagnia di S. Orsola vi sta un estratto d'una lettera del P. Francesco Landini, che sta nel monte vicino a Brescia, scritta al P. Franceschino Visdomini del'Ordine de' Minori a dì 21 dicembre 1566. Questa lettera è di gran lode per la Ven. Angela, leggendosi di lei varie azioni, come anche è di lode per tutta la Compagnia. È di avertire che questa lettera non si trova nel'Acta Mediolanensis Ecclesiae della seconda edizione del 1599.

## REGULA DELLA COMPAGNIA DE SANTA ORSOLA1

#### AL LETTORE

Natural cosa è che ogni rational creatura bramar debba d'andare et congiongersi col principio et fonte de l'esser suo. Et non solamente questo gli convien volere, ma anchora con ogni suo sforzo dee cercare et investigare tutte quelle vie et mezzi per li quali più agevolmente pervenir possia ad esso suo bramato fine. Et chi questo non fa, quello è da esser giudicato haver eletto et preso non già la vera strata che guida a salvamento et al desiato porto della quiete, ma quella che a perditione ognun conduce.

Per la qual cosa, essendo hoggi ne la città nostra molte persone bramose della patria sua celeste, et non mancho de ritrovar et seguire la più conveniente via che a ciò guidar possia, hanno visto da una banda la vita de coniugati non solamente esser vitta bassa et travagliata, ma anchora hoggi di comunamente esser tale, che Dio volesse che fosse vera coniugale continentia, et non quasi una fornicatione lecita sotto specie di matrimonio; da l'altra parte aldeno l'astinentia de religiosi da molti esser giudicata che alquanto relentata sia, et declinata dal costume et regola deli lor primi fondatori. Onde quasi sforzate da essa cosa, hanno eletto una via di mezzo. Et

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> In the Italian edition this title is printed anastatically.

così, né intrando ne monasterii, né in matrimonio copulandosi, deliberato hanno di menar vita devota et saluberrima, come che sia stata una voce di verità che nel cuor gli habbia detto: Tenete questa strata di mezzo, perché anche la virtù in mezzo consiste, et medium tenuere beati, sì come per proverbio se dice.

Et tanto più questa sorte de vita è parsa degna et giusta, quanto pare esser imagi-

ne, et quasi una sintilla del viver dela primitiva Giesa.

Allhora non eran anchora monasterii, ma tutti stando nelle proprie case, servavan la vera vita christiana. Tutti eran uniti de spirito, et concordi di sentimento. Lun l'altro se cognosevan sì come veri soldati che militavan sotto al vexillo della croce, et Giesù Christo; prompti eran più presto di morire, che mai cometter cosa indegna del suo Re, et altre simili cose non discordanti da questa nova nostra congregatione.

Et che sa che forse questo non sia un principio da Dio fatto, dela riformatione

dela Giesa? La quale tanto è sta predetta, che in breve per esser sia?

Imperò che dove maggior, anzi giamai altra reformation di Giesa esser po, che la rinovation del spirito et reformation di vita, secondo le opere et la verità della fede

già da gli apostoli, primi fondatori, nel petto del mondo piantata?

Et gli spirti di questa congregatione, per la gran parte, son così accesi al servir a Dio, che l'amor de tutte le cose sotto il ciel, al desiderio dele celesti sottometteno. Et hano il cuor così forte, et di eterna verità fermato, che più presto mille fiade il di morire, che mai offender il suo fattore, eleggerebbeno.

Per la qual cosa non so già qual possa esser così sciocco et ignorante, chel valore

et utilitade di questa gloriosa vita non comprenda.

Qui non è disturbo, né incommoditade di creatura alcuna; non patri, non madre s'affligono della separatione delle lor figlie; securi stanno dela sua castità, s'allegrano della santità, se correggono dal essempio. Non doti, non altra cura i conturbano; non monasterii se edificano; le contrate se consolano; la città se nobilita.

Qual cosa è che star male qui se vedda?

Queste son prompte al far bene a tutti, esser sobdite ad ogni volontà et creatura, dove non se opre contra l'honor di Dio. Ogni cosa raggionevole voleno; ogni cosa dishonesta sprezzano; et, per il ver ben commune, poner la vita propria non recusano.

Non cosa alcuna innovano; solamente tendono a rinovar si stesse et altri, col suo essempio, et essortationi al antiquo valore et costume, già dal Spirito Santo ne gli cuori spicialmente de primi nostri operato.

Bramose sono d'ogni bene, vigorose, liete; et che del'amor delle cose divine lam-

peggiano.

Qual adoncha è quello così invido et malegno che qui la boccha aprire temerariamente ardisca? et non più presto, o voltar voglia l'amaro toscho in piacevole carità, o al mancho comsompto in si stesso star nascosto non elegga? mentreche il vede senza suo gran danno non poter metter al sol chiaro scandol alcuno de odiose tenebre?

Ma qui non è il luoco de spiegar le gran laudi di questa santa unione. Altre fiate forse (se Dio il concederà) se cantaran le sue virtuti, sì che la gloria de il lor valor per il mondo risonar si senta.

Questo solamente per hora havemo a dire: che, essendo questa Compagnia principiata, è parso cosa necessaria, nonché buona et utile, comporre qualche via et regola certa; la quale esse persone seguendo, possiano essere secure di conservar po-

tersi in essa rettitudine di vita; specialmente essendone molte altre, le quale, mosse dalla fama et odore dele prime, bramano d'accompagnarse et star sotto la lor guida et obedientia.

A doncha, concorrendo il giudicio di molte persone saggie et esperte, et massimamente delle più attempate et esperte vergini della Compagnia, col agiuto di Dio se è componesta questa breve institutione, la quale volemo sia detta Regola della Compagnia di Sant'Orsola; imperoché principalmente quelle vergini che in detta Compagnia han dato il nome suo, servar la doveranno.

Non che, per questo, se voglia escluder sì come seguaci et adherenti ancor ogni altro, gli quali servar voglian detta Regola, et se non in tutto, almancho in parte, sì come a lor pareranno et potran fare, et come al far ben obligar se voranno. Imperoché qui se invita, qui se abbrazza con gran disio ogni sorte di creature: homini, don-

ne, grandi, piccoli, gioveni, vecchii.

Qui vengan vedoe con la castitade. Qui coniugati con la continentia, Qui peccatori con la conversione. Qui ogni creatura a chi piace drizzar i passi verso il Cielo; che, quanto più saranno, tanto mazzor allegrezza se pigliarà, et maggiormente Giesù Christo signor nostro sarà in mezzo di noi, et più se ne manifestarà la lui virtù et possanza.

Ma però, sì come apertamente se protesta, alcun giudicar non voglia che in questa Regola se metta legame alcuno di obligatione di peccato; imperoché qui non se danno leggi de obligatione, ma consiglii d'amore. Ognun se essorta, ognun s'envita alla gloria et beltade di questa vita, ma a niuno pese alcuno di obligo se pone.

Se alcuna vergine harà dato il suo nome nella Compagnia, et poi gli verrà appetito di uscir fuora et discender a più bassa vita, già non peccarà per obligation et leggi alcune nostre. Ma ella varde ben se gli parerà cosa natural et ragionevole ascender in alto per descender poi; lassar il meglio per applicarse al peggio, Et, ancor, se la inconstantia è cosa degna di laude o di vituperio. Et, insiema, tremar voglia quel detto evangelico: Nemo ponens manum ad aratrum et respiciens retro, aptus est regno Dei. Et quello che se legge de la donna di Loth, la quale, mentre che volse a drieto voltarsi, subito in una statua di sale fo rivoltata. Ciò è, totalmente divenne sterile d'ogni frutto di bene.

Là onde, sì come ognun se essorta a questa beltà di vita, così ancor ognun se consiglia che per niente intrar debba, per uscirne poi. Imperoché molto meglio sarìa il

non esser intrato.

Finalmente saper se fa come se vuole tanto questa Regola esser bona et valida, quanto sarà raggionevole et secondo gli consiglii et mente de la santa Giesia, et in ciò cognosciuta dal Episcopo pastor nostro, et poi ancora (se così de mistier sarà) dal Sommo Pontifice confirmata.

Per la qual cosa pregar volemo ognuno, per le viscere della misericordia del Signor nostro, che già temerariamente, nanche così leggiermente questa unione et Regola biasmar voglia, pria che ben vedda et examine il valore et bontà sua. Il che se farà, la benedettione del Spirito Santo sia sempre sopra di lui. Ma anche se altramente far vorà, saper voglia che indarno contra il Ciel calcitrar potrà.

Vale.

## INDICE DELLI CAPITTOLI DELLA REGOLA DELLA COMPAGNIA DI SANT'ORSOLA<sup>2</sup>

Prologo a carte	I
Del modo del ricever	III
Come debbano andar vestite	III
Del modo del conversar nel secolo	IIII
Del digiuno	IIII
Del'oratione	V
Del'andar a messa ogni giorno	VII
Della confessione	VII
Dena obediencia i i i i i i i i i i i i i i i i i i	VIII
Dena verginitude:	/IIII
Della povertade	X
Del governo	X

Nel nome della beata et individua Trinitade. Prologo sopra la vita de virgine, novamente principiata, che per nome si chiama Compagnia di Santa Orsola. Alle dilette figlie et sorelle dela Compagnia de Sant'Orsola.

Poi che, figliole et sorelle dilettissime, Dio vi ha concessa gratia de separarvi dalle tenebre de questo misero mondo, et unirve insiema a servir a sua divina Maiestade, haveti da ringratiarlo infinitamente, che a voi specialmente habbia concesso sì singular duono. Imperoché quante persone grandi, et altre d'ogni condicione, che non hanno, né potranno haver tal gratia!

Onde, sorelle mie, ve essorto, anzi, tutte ve prego et supplico che, essendo state cossì ellette ad esser vere et intatte spose del Figliol di Dio, primo vogliate cogno-

scer che importa tal cosa, et che nuova et stupenda dignità sia questa.

Dapoi, che vi sforzati con ogni vostro potere de conservarvi secondo che da Dio chiamate seti, et cerchare et volere tutti quelli mezzi et vie che necessarie sono in perseverare et prosperare fina al fine. Imperoché non basta a incomminciare, se anche non se sarà perseverato. Onde dice la Verità: «Qui perseveraverit usque in finem, hic salvus erit»; chi insino al fine perseverato harà, quello salvo sarà.

Et anchor dice: «Beati qui audiunt verbum Dei et custodiunt illud»; cioè: beati sono quelli alli quali Dio harà inspirato nel cuore la luce di Verità, et gli haverà dato sentimento di bramare la lor patria celeste; et da poi cercaran di conservare tal

voce di verità in se stesse, et bon desiderio.

Quella persona indubitatamente potrà conservarse, la quale anche vorà abrazzare li mezzi et le vie a ciò necessarie, imperoché puoca o nulla differentia è tra il dire liberamente: più non voglio servir a Dio et il non volere le vie et regole necessarie al poterse in ciò mantenere. Et tanto più, sorelle mie, bisogna che siamo vigilante, quanto la impresa è di tal importantia, che di mazzor esser non potria, dove va la vita et salute nostra, et dove siemo chiamate a tal gloria di vita, che spose del Figliol di Dio siamo, et in ciel regine diveniamo. Però accorte et prudenti qui esser bisogna; imperò che tanto mazzor faticha et pericolo li convien che sia, quanto la impre-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> In the Italian edition this "Indice" and the text of the Rule which follows are printed anastatically.

sa che se fa è di mazzor valore; perché non è sorte di male che qui non ce sia per opponersi, considerando che qui siemo poste nel mezzo delli lazzi et pericoli, sì che contra di noi se ha ad armare l'acqua, l'aer et la terra, con tutto l'inferno, perché già la carne et sensualitade nostra non è morta. Nanche l'adversario nostro, il diavolo, dorme; il qual mai non ripossa, ma sempre (come dice San Piero), a modo de leone che rugge, mira et cercha a che modo il possa divorare alcuna di noi, et con tante sue vie et astutie, che nesun le potria numerare. Ma però, sorelle mie, per questo spaventar non ve doveti: imperoché, se vi sforzareti per l'avenire, a vostro gran potere, de viver sì come richiede alle vere spose del Altissimo, et servare questa Regola sì come via per la quale haveti a caminare, et la qual è stata composta per utilità vostra, io ho questa indubitata et ferma fede et speranza nella infinita bontà divina, che non solamente tutti li pericoli et adversitadi di facil superaremo, ma anchora con gran gloria et giubilatione nostra li venceremo. Anzi, trapassaremo questa nostra brevissima vita consolatamente, et ogni nostro dolore et tristezza se voltarà in gaudio et allegrezza, et trovaremo le strate spinose et sassose a noi floride et coperte di piastre de finissimo oro. Imperoché gli angeli di vita eterna saranno cum noi, ciò è tanto quanto participaremo di vita angelica. Horsù valente, adonque, tutte abbraciamo questa santa Regola, che Dio per sua gratia ne ha offerto. Et, armate de gli suoi sacri precetti, vogliamosi così virilmente diportare, che ancor noi, a modo dela santa Judith, tronchata animosamente la testa d'Oloferne, cioè del diavolo, gloriosamente nella patria ritornar possiamo, dove da tutti in Ciel et terra gran gloria et triompho ne sia per nascer. Hor tutte adoncha, di gratia, state attente con grande et bramoso cuore.

#### DEL MODO DEL RICEVER

## Cap. I

Principalmente: se arricorda come ogn'una che haverà a intrare o esser admessa in questa Compagnia, debba esser vergine et habbia ferma intentione di servir a Dio in tal sorte di vita. Da poi: che la intre allegramente et di propria voluntade. Tertio: che la non habbia fatta promissione a monasterii et mancho a' homini mondani. Quarto: se l'haverà padre, o madre, o altri superiori, essa prima gli domande licentia, sì che le governatrici et governatori della Compagnia anchora essi parleno con loro a cioché non havesseno causa alcuna legitima se poi, per aventura, i volesseno impedirla a intrare sotto questa santa obedientia. Quinto: che la sia almancho di etade de dodeci anni. Sarricorda, però, che le di menore etade pono esser recevude in capitolo, per amaestrarle alla verità di questa singular vita.

#### COME DEBBANO ANDAR VESTITE

## Cap. II

Ancora s'arricorda, sì come gli vestimenti et portadure debbano esser honeste et semplici, come veramente richiede la virginal honestade: sì che ogn'una vada vestita con gli busti serrati convenientemente, et sopra con gli veli, over velette di tela, come saria de lino, over bombaso non troppo sottile et per niente transparente; et di tal sorte siano ancora gli panetti. Hor le veste deno esser come saria di panno, o sarza, et di colore come saria di bruna, o de taneto oscuro, o de beretino, o de morello oscuro, sì come a cadauna, secondo la lor possibilità, convegnarà. Ma però se pono portare quelle stesse veste, le quale esse sorelle se inbatteno havere quando le intra-

no in detta Regola; però solamente tanto quanto esse veste duraranno, intendendo però che mai non ricchiede sorte alcuna di balzotti, né de bredoni a le manege, né sorte alcuna di tagliadure, né rechami et altri simili lavori. Et vadino cinti del cingulo de la cintura, in segno de exterior mortificatione et perfetta interior castitade. Non ricchiede seda, et mancho veludo, et argento, et oro; non pantofile et scarpe, se non come sarian negre et de forma honesta. Non velli et panetti coloridi, o di seda, o d'altra sorte, troppo sottili et transparenti; non crespadure alle camise. Non, finalmente, fozze et varietade et transparentie alcune, et altre vanitade che possiano macchiare la conscientia propria o del prossimo, et siano contrarie alla verginal honestade.

#### DEL MODO DEL CONVERSAR NEL SECOLO

#### Cap. III

Oltra di questo, se arricorda: Primo: che non se habbia pratica con foemine di mala sorte. Da poi: che per niente se ascolteno imbassade de homini o de donne, specialmente in secreto. Tertio: che non se vada a nozze, et mancho a balli et giostre, et altri simili spettacoli de piaceri mondani. Quarto: che fuggano di stare a balchoni et mancho sule porte et nelle strade, né sole, né in compagnia, per molti rispetti. Quinto: che, andando per le strade, o vie, vadano con gli occhii bassi et serrate honestamente con gli suoi panetti et vadan prestamente, non induggiando, né fermandose o qui o lì, né stando a mirar curiosamente cosa alcuna. Imperoché da pertutto sono pericoli et varie insidie et lazzi diabolici. Sesto: che, se le madri, o altri superiori mondani, le volesseno indure a tali, o simili pericoli, over le volesseno impedire dal digiuno, o oratione, o confessione, o d'altra sorte di bene, esse presto lo referiscano a le governatrici della Compagnia, accioché esse gli provedano.

#### **DEL DIGIUNO**

#### Cap. IIII

Ancora se aricorda che ogn'una abbrazzar voglia anche il digiuno corporale, sì come cosa necessaria, et come mezzo et via al ver digiuno spirituale, per il qual tutti gli vitii et errori dala mente se tronchano. Et a questo ne invita chiarissimamente l'essempio di tutte le persone sante, et sopra tutto la vita di Giesù Christo, unica via al Cielo. Onde la santa madre Giesa questo palesamente nelle orecchie di tutti gli fedeli intona, così a Dio parlando: «Qui corporali ieiunio vitia comprimis, mentem elevas, virtutem largiris et praemia»; ciò è: Dio, il qual per il digiuno corporale refreni li vitii, inalzi la mente, dai la virtù et gli premii; imperoché sì come la gola fo origine di tutti li mali nostri, così il digiuno et astinentia convien che sia principio et mezzo de tutti gli beni et profetti nostri spirituali. Però dicono e' sacri canoniste: «Indictum est ieiunium abstinentiae, lex a Domino Deo, prevaricatio legis a diabolo»; ciò è: comandato è sta dal Signor Dio il digiuno, legge de astinentia, et la transgressione della legge è indutta dal diavolo. Per la qual cosa essortemo ogn'una a digiunare, specialmente questi giorni del anno:

Primo: tutti quelli che comanda la santa madre Giesa, ciò è tutta la quadragesima, li quatro tempori et tutte le vigilie comandate. Da poi: tutto l'advento. Tertio: se digiune subito doppo l'Epiphania quaranta giorni, per domar gli sensi et gli appetiti et lascivie, che allhora specialmente par che signorezzan nel mondo, et anchora per

implorar inanzi al throno della divina Altezza misericordia per tante dissolutioni, che in così fatti tempi da christiani sono comesse, come è più che palese a tutti. Quarto: doppo l'ottava di Pascha se digiune tre giorni della settimana, ciò è il mercori, il venere et il sabbato. Quinto: se digiune gli tre giorni delle rogationi, over letanie, che la Giesa celebra avanti l'Asscensione, per implorare il divino aiuto per il popol christiano. Sesto: se digiune doppo l'Asscensione ogni giorno, et insiema se stie in oratione, con quanta forza de spirito se poterà, fina al giorno de la missione del Spirito Santo, ciò è fina a pascha di maggio, domandando quella gran promissione fatta da Giesù Christo a gli suo eletti et ben disposti. Settimo: doppo pascha di maggio se ritorne agli tre giorni sopradetti di la settimana fina a l'advento.

Ma perché non si vole se non cose discrete, però se admonisse che niuna debba digiunare senza il consilio specialmente del suo patre spirituale et delle governatrici di essa Compagnia, le quale habbiano a relentare et sminuire essi digiunii, secondo che esser bisogno se vederà, perché chi indiscretamente affligesse il suo corpo, «Esset offerre holocaustum de rapina»; ciò è sarìa far sacrificio di robbaria, sì come di-

cono ancora gli sacri canoni.

#### DE L'ORATIONE

#### Cap. V

Se arricorda ancora che ogn'una sia sollecita all'oratione così mentale come vocale, la quale è compagna del digiuno; perho dice la Scrittura: «Bona est oratio cum ieiunio»; ciò è: bona è l'oratione col digiuno. Et se legge nel Evangelio di quella Anna, figlia di Phanuel, la quale nel tempio dì e notte di continuo serviva a Dio in ieiuniis et orationibus. Imperoché, sì come per il digiuno se mortifica gli appetiti dela carne et proprii sentimenti, così per l'oratione se impetra da Dio la gratia della vita spirituale. Et benché col spirito et con la mente bisogna sempre orare, per il continuo bisogno che se ha del aiuto di Dio; et per questo dice la Verità: «Oportet semper orare»; ciò è: bisogna sempre orare. Tutta via consigliemo ancora la frequente oratione vocale, per la quale se excitano li sentimenti corporei et se dispone alla mentale. Per la qual cosa ogn'una voglia ogni giorno dire almancho l'Officio della Madonna et li sette Psalmi penitentiali con devotione et attentione. Imperoché dicendo l'Officio se parla con Dio, come anche diceva il beato Allessandro martire. Et chi nol'sapran dire, sel'faccian insignare dalle sorelle chel saperanno. Hor, quelle che non sapran leggere, vogliano dire ogni giorno a Matutino trentatre Pater Noster et trentatre Ave Maria, per memoria de gli trentatre anni che Giesù Christo visse in questo mondo per amor nostro. Poi, a Prima dica sette Pater Noster et sette Ave Maria per li sette duoni del Spirito Santo. Et similmente tanti ne dica a cadauna delle altre hore canonice, ciò è a Terza, a Sesta, a Nona, a Vespro et a Compieta. Et per dar materia et qualche via ancor all'oratione mentale, essortemo ogn'una ad inalzar le mente a Dio, et per ogni giorno essercitarse et così, o ad altro, o simil modo, nel secreto del cor suo dire:

Signor mio, illumina le tenebre del cuor mio, et dammi gratia più presto di morire, che mai hoggi offenda la tua divina Maestade. Et assegura i miei affetti et sensi,
che non prevariccheno né a destra, né a sinistra, né me rivoltino dalla lucidissima
faccia tua, che contenta ogni cuor afflitto. Haimé dolente che, intrando nel secreto
del cuor mio, di vergogna non ardisco levar gli occhii al cielo, che son degna da esser divorata così viva nel inferno, vedendo in me tanti errori, tante brutezze et vitu-

perii, tante monstruose et spaventose fiere et figure. Onde son constretta, dì et notte, andando, stando, operando, pensando, di proclamare et gittar cridi al Cielo, et domandar misericordia et spatio di penitentia. Degnati, o benignissimo Signore, di perdonarmi tante offese, et ogni mio fallo che mai habbia comesso fin hora, dal giorno del santo battesmo. Degnati di perdonare gli peccati, haimé, ancora de mio patre et matre, e di miei parenti et amici, et de tutto il mondo. Io tene prego, per la tua sacratissima passione, et sangue precioso sparso per amor nostro, per il tuo santo nome, il qual sia benedetto sopra l'arena del mare, sopra le giozze delle acque, sopra la moltitudine delle stelle. Mi doglio che sia stata tanto tarda a incominciare a servire alla tua divina Maestade. Haimé, fin hora non ho mai sparso pur una giozzetta di sangue per amor tuo; nanche mai son stata obediente a tuoi divini precetti, et ogni adversitade me stata aspera per il puocho amore tuo.

Signor, in luoco de quelle meschine creature che non te cognoscono, né si curano d'esser participevoli della tua sacratissima passione, mene crappa il cuore, et volentiera (s'io potesse) spargerei il proprio sangue per aprire la cecitade de le lor menti. Però, Signor mio, unica vita et speranza mia, ti prego che tu te degni de recever questo mio vilissimo et immondo cuore, et abbrusciare ogni suo affetto et pas-

sione nell'ardente fornace del tuo divin amore.

Ti priego che tu ricevi il mio libero arbitrio, ogni mia propria voluntade, la quale

da sé, per esser infetta dal peccato, non sa discerner il bene dal male.

Riceve ogni mio pensar, parlar et operare; ogni mia cosa, finalmente, così interiore come exteriore: il che tutto offerisco avanti e'piedi della tua divina Maestade. Et ti priego che tu te degne de riceverlo, benché ne sia indegna. Amen.

#### DEL ANDAR A MESSA OGNI GIORNO

## Cap. VI

Ancor ogn'una vada a Messa ogni giorno, et ne vedda almancho una integra, et se gli stie con modestia et devotamente, imperoché nella sacra Messa se ritrovan tutti gli meriti della passione del Signor nostro. Et quanto più se gli sta con maggior attentione, fede et contritione, tanto più se participa de quei benedetti meriti et se riceve mazzor consolatione. Anzi, sarà un communicarse col spirito. Ma perho s'arricorda a non induggiar troppo nelle giese; ma (se voranno più longamente orare) vadan nelle sue camere, et ivi chiuse, oreno qualmente et quanto il spirito et conscientia dittaranno.

#### **DELLA CONFESSIONE**

## Cap. VII

Se essorta ancora al frequentare la confessione, necessaria medicina delle piaghe dell'anime nostre. Imperoché già mai niuno sarà giustificato dal peccato, se egli prima con la boccha non confessarà al sacerdote gli suoi falli, come dice la Scrittura: «Dic tu prius iniquitates tuas, ut justificeris»; ciò è: di tu prima li tuoi peccati, acioché tu sia giustificato. Et la Verità dice a San Piero: «Tibi dabo claves regni caelorum, et quodcumque ligaveris super terram, erit ligatum et in caelis; et quodcumque solveris super terram, erit solutum et in caelis»; ciò è: io ti darò le chiave del reame del Cielo, e qualunche harai legato sopra la terra sarà legato ancora in Cielo, e qualunche harai deslegato sopra la terra sarà deslegato ancor in Cielo. Dove chiaramente se dimostra il peccato non poter esser tolto via se non per il sacerdote et

per la confessione. Per che: a che fozza il sacerdote potrà il peccato desligare, se nol lo saperà? Et a che modo il potral sapere, se quello che la comesso, esso non lo manifeste con la propria boccha, conciosia cosa ch'el peccato ascoso stia dentro n'el petto? Ogn'una adoncha voglia presentarsi avanti il sacerdote, sì come avanti Dio eterno giudice, et ivi dolente, schiettamente et in verità di conscientia, confesse il suo peccato et ne domandi perdonanza, et sempre con timore et reverentia stia sotto al confessore, fin che habbia receuta l'absolutione. Sopra questo se fa sapere qualmente se ha a deputare un luoco, o giesa certa, dove se ha da elezzer un commune padre spirituale prudente et maturo di etade, al qualogn'una voglia almancho una volta il mese confessarsi; et poi, ogni primo vener del mese congregarsi ad essa giesa, et ivi tutte insiema communicarsi da esso prefato padre. Oltra di questo, essortemo ogn'una confessarsi et communicarsi alla propria parochia alle feste solenni.

#### DELLA OBEDIENTIA

#### Cap. VIII

Se essorta ancora ogn'una a servare la santa obedientia, sola vera abnegatione della propria voluntade, la qual è in noi a modo del tenebroso inferno. Però dice Giesù Christo: «Non veni facere voluntatem meam, sed eius, qui misit me Pater»; ciò è: non son venuto per far il mio voler, ma quello del Padre che m'ha mandato. Imperoché l'obedientia è nel homo a modo d'una gran luce, che fa ogni opra esser buona et accetta; onde se legge: «Melius est obedire, quam sacrificare»; ciò è: meglio è l'obedire che il sacrificare. Et gli sacri canoni dicono: «Nullum bonum est extra obedientiam»; ciò è: ogni cosa nostra, se dee essere bona, bisogna che sia fatta sotto obedientia.

Per questo ogn'una voglia obedire: primo a gli comandamenti di Dio, imperoché dice la Scrittura: «Maledictus, qui declinat a mandatis tuis»; ciò è: maledetto è quello che non serva i toi commandamenti. Da poi: a qu[e]llo che commanda la santa madre Giesa, per che dice la Verità: «Qui vos audit, me audit, et qui vos spernit, me spernit»; ciò è: che alde voi, alde mi; chi sprezza voi, sprezza mi. Tertio: obedire al proprio episcopo et pastore, et al proprio padre spirituale. Et alli governatori et governatrice della Compagnia. Più oltra: obedire alli padri et matre, et altri superiori di casa, alli quali consiglieno domandar perdonanza una volta la settimana per segno de suggiettione et conservatione della charità. Obedire ancora alle leggi et statutti de Signori, et alli governatori delle republice. Et sopra tutto: obedire a gli consiglii et inspiratione che di continuo ne manda il Spirito Santo nel cuore; la cui voce tanto più chiaramente aldiremo, quanto più purificata et monda haveremo la conscientia. Imperoché il Spirito Santo è quello il qual (come dice Giesù Christo). «Docet nos omnem veritatem»; ciò è: insegna a noi ogni verità.

Hor, in conclusione: obedire a Dio, et a ogni creatura per amor de Dio, come dice l'Apostolo, pur che non ce sia comandata cosa alcuna contra l'honor di Dio et

della propria honestate.

## DELLA VERGINITADE

## Cap. VIIII

Ogn'una ancora voglie conservare la sacra virginitade, non già di ciò facciando voto per essortatione homana, ma voluntariamente facciando a Dio sacrificio del

proprio cuore. Imperoché la virginitade (come dicono ancora gli canoniste) è sorella de tutti gli angeli, vittoria delli appetiti, regina delle vertute, et che possiede tutti gli beni. Però ogn'una dee così in ogni cosa deportarse, che non se cometta né in se stessa, né in conspetto del prossimo, cosa alcuna che sia indegna di spose del Altissimo. Sì che sopra tutto se tenga il cuor puro et la conscientia monda da ogni cativo pensier, da ogni ombra d'invidia et malivolentia, da ogni discordia et mala sospitione, et da ogni altro cativo appetito et voluntade. Ma sia lieta et sempre piena di caritade, et fede, et speranza in Dio. Et la conversatione col prossimo sia ragionevole et modesta, come dice San Paolo: «Modestia vestra nota sit omnibus hominibus»; ciò è: la costumezza et prudentia vostra sia palesa a tutti, sì che ogni atto et parlare sia honesto et costumato. Non nominando Dio vanamente. Non giurando, ma solamente dicendo con modestia: sì, sì, over: no, no, come Giesù Christo insegna. Non rispondendo superbamente. Non facciando le cose malvolentiera. Non stando adirata. Non mormorando. Non riportando cosa alcuna di male. Non, finalmente, facciando atto, né gesto alcuno, indegno specialmente di chi ha nome di serve di Giesù Christo. Ma tutte le parolle, atti et movimenti nostri sempre sian in amaistramento et edificatione de chi harà pratica con noi, habbiando sempre nel cuore l'abbrasciata caritade. Più oltra, ogn'una voglie esser disposta più presto di morire, che mai consentire a macchiare et profanare così sacra gioia.

#### **DELLA POVERTADE**

#### Cap. X

Essorteremo finalmente ogn'una ad abbrazzare la povertade, non solamente quella del effetto de cose temporale, ma sopra tutto la vera povertà di spirito, per la quale l'homo se spoglia il cuore d'ogni affetto et speranza di cose create, et di si stesso. Et in Dio ha ogni suo bene, et fuora di Dio se vede povero del tutto, et esser totalmente un niente, et con Dio haver il tutto. Però dice la Verità: «Beati pauperes spiritu, quoniam ipsorum est regnum caelorum»; ciò è: beati son gli poveri de spirito, imperoché de lor è il reame del Cielo. Et per tanto ogn'una se sforze spogliarsi del tutto, et metter ogni suo bene, et amore, et delettatione, non in robba, non in cibi et golla, non in parenti et amici, non in si stessa et alcuna sua propria provisione et sapere, ma in solo Dio, et in la lui sola benigna et ineffabil providentia. Però dice l'Evangelio: «Primum quaerite regnum Dei, et haec omnia apponentur vobis»; ciò è: cercate prima il reame di Dio, e queste altre tutte vostre cose vi saran messe inanzi. Et ancor dice: «Nolite solliciti esse, quod comedatis, neque quod bibatis: scit enim Pater vester quia his omnibus indigetis»; ciò è: non vogliati esser solleciti in cercar che debbiati mangiar, nanche che debbiati bever, imperoché il Padre vostro celeste egli ben sa che haveti debisogno de tutte queste cose; come se chiaramente dicesse: non ve affanati sopra cosa alcuna di bisogno temporale, imperoché Dio egli solo sa, po et vole provedergli; il qual non vole se non il solo bene et gaudio vostro.

#### **DEL GOVERNO**

#### Cap. XI

Per governare detta Compagnia se dispone che se debba elezzere quatro vergini delle più sufficiente della Compagnia, et almancho quatro matroni vedove prudenti et honeste de vita, et quatro homini maturi et di vita probata. Le qual vergini siano come maestre et guidatrice nella vita spirituale. Et le vedove sian come matre a esser sollecete circa il bene et utilitade delle sorelle et figlie spirituale. Et gli quatro homini siano come agenti et patri ancora circa l'occurrente necessitade della Compagnia, o più o mancho come se vederà bastare. Hor le quatro vergini vogliano specialmente haver questo per sua impresa, ciò è de visitar ogni quindeci giorni tutte le altre sorelle vergini che sono per la città, per confortarle et aggiutarle, se le fosseno in qualche discordia o in alcun'altra tribulatione, sì di corpo come di mente; o ver che gli superiori suoi di casa gli facessen qualche ingiuria, o le volessen impedirle da qualche sorte di bene, o indurle a qualche pericolo di male. Et se lor stesse non potessen provedergli, lo referiscano alle matrone. Et se manche lor potran riparargli, se voglie convocare anche gli quatro homini, accioché tutti insiema concorrano a dar rimedio.

Se l'accadesse che alcuna di esse sorelle, per esser orphana, non potesse haver il suo, o ver, essendo massara, o donzella, o ad altro modo, non potesse haver la sua mercede, o ver accadesse altra cosa simile, onde bisognasse andar per palazzo et per via di ragione, o ver metter daccordo (il che è il meglio che far se possia), all'hora essi quatro homini per carità, a modo di padri, vogliano pigliar questa impresa, et soccorrere secondo il bisogno che sarà.

Se qualch'una delle persone del governo manchasse o per morte, o per esser levata dal officio, all'hora la Compagnia voglia congregarsi, et eleggerne delle altre per supplire il legittimo numero. Ancora, sel vene fusse che non potesse fare il suo officio, o se diportasse male, quella persona sia dal governo rimovesta.

Se per voluntà et dispensation di Dio avenesse che in commune se havessen qualche dinari, o altra robba, se arricorda che se gli debba haver bon governo, et prudentemente se habbian a dispensare, specialmente in soventione delle sorelle et secondo ogni occorrente bisogno.

Sel fosseno due almancho sorelle rimaste sole, senza padre et matre, et altri superiori, all'hora per carità gli sia tolta una casa a fitto (se elle non haveranno), et siano sovenute ne gli lor bisogni. Ma sel ne sarà rimasta se non una sola, all'hora qualch'una delle altre la voglia ricever in casa sua, et gli sia porzesta la soventione che parerà a chi governarano. Ma perho, se ella volesse andar a star per massara, o donzella, essi che governano habbian cura di questo, accioché la sia collocata dove bene et honestamente star possia.

Sel ne fussen de così vecchie, che per si stesse non potesseno sostentarsi, queste vogliano di gratia esser sovenute et governate, sì come vere spose di Giesù Christo.

Finalmente s'arricorda, se alcuna delle sorelle sarà inferma, che la sia visitata, et sovenuta, et governata, de di et di notte, s'el sarà la necessitade. Et se la fusse per morire, voglie lassare qualche cosetta alla Compagnia, in segno d'amore et charitade.

Quando qualch'una sarà morta, all'hora tutte le altre la voglian compagnare alla sepoltura, andando a due a due, con carità et con una candela in mano per una. Et che saperà leggere, dica l'Officio da morti; et chi non saprà lezzere, dica trentatre Pater Noster et tante Ave Maria, acciò che, se quella anima fusse per qualche peccato nelle pene del purgatorio, il nostro dolce et benigno sposo Giesù Christo la cave da quelle pene, et la conduca alla gloria celeste con le altre vergini, incoronata di quella aurea et chiarissima virginal corona.

# 2. Regola edizione Turlino<sup>1</sup>

Brescia, Biblioteca Queriniana, Cinquecentine EE.1.m.1. Cfr. supra, parte I, cap. I, 3.a.

Regola della nova Compagnia di Santa Orsola di Brescia, per la quale si vede come si habbiano a governar le vergini di detta Compagnia accioché vivendo christianamente possino doppo la lor morte fruir i beni di vita eterna. In Brescia per Damiano Turlino.

#### INDICE DELLA REGOLA DELLA COMPAGNIA

Prologo	]
Del modo del recevere le putte	II
Del vestir delle vergini	III
Della conversatione nel secolo	IIII
Del digiuno	V
Della oratione	VI
Del andar a messa	VII
Della confessione	VIII
Della obedientia	IX
Della verginità	X
Della povertà	XI
Del governo	XII

Nel nome della Santissima Trinità, comincia il prologo della vita delle vergini di novo principiata col nome della Compagnia di Santa Orsola, et ad essa dedicato.

### **PROEMIO**

### Cap. I

Poi che voi, figliole et sorelle mie dilettissime, Dio vi ha concessa gratia di separarvi dalle tenebre di questo misero mondo, et unirve insieme a servire a sua divina Maestà, haveti da renderli infinite gratie, che a voi specialmente habbia concesso così singulare dono. Imperoché quante persone grandi saranno, cioè Imperatrici, Regine, Duchesse et simili, che per maggior sua felicità et lor gloria desideraranno di essere state una minima ancilla vostra, considerando la condittione vostra esser stata tanto più degna et megliore della sua. Onde, sorelle mie, vi essorto, anci vi prego che, essendo voi state elette ad esser vere et intatte spose del Figliolo di Dio, prima dico che vogliate conoscer quanto inporta tale cosa, et che nova et mirabile dignità sia questa. Doppo, che vi sforzate con ogni possibile vostro di conservarve secondo che da Dio sarete chiamate. Et cercarete di voler tutti quei mezzi et vie che sono necessarie per prosperare, et in ciò perseverare fin al fine. Imperoché non basta alcun principio senza perseveranza; perché dice la Scrittura: «Qui perseveraverit

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> In the Italian edition the Rule and Decrees are printed anastatically.

usque in finem, hic salvus erit»; cioè: chi havrà perseverato fin al fine, questo sarà salvo. Et anco dice: «Beati qui audiunt verbum Dei et custodiunt illud»; cioè: beati quelli, alli quali Dio havrà inspirato la luce di Verità, et gli haverà datto sentimento di bramar la loro celeste patria, et doppo cercar di conservare tal voce di verità et buon desiderio in se stesse.

Quella persona adonque potrà indubitatamente conservarse, la quale anche vorrà abbrazare i mezzi et vie a questo necessarie, imperoché puoca, o niuna differentia è fra il dire liberamente: più non voglio servir a Dio, et non voler le vie et regole pertinenti al poter in ciò mantenerse. Onde tanto più, sorelle mie, fa bisogno che siamo vigilanti, quanto la impresa è di tal importantia che magior essere non potria, dove va la vita et salute nostra, conciosia che siamo chiamate a tal gloria di vita, che siamo spose del Figliol di Dio, et in ciel gloriose regine. Però qui bisogna essere accorte et prudenti perché, quanto più fatica et pericolo lì convien che sia, tanto più la impresa che si fa è di magior valore, conciosia che non è sorte di male che qui non sia per opponerse, considerando che siamo qui poste nel mezzo di lazzi et pericoli, perché, non essendo morta la carne et sensualità nostra, contra di noi si armaranno gli elementi et tutto lo inferno. Nanche il demonio adversario nostro, mai dormendo né ripossando, ma sempre (come dice S. Pietro) a guisa di leone ruggendo, mira et ricercha come possa divorare alcuna di noi, con le infinite sue vie et astutie, lequali tante sono che niun le potria racontare. Ma per questo, sorelle mie, non vi spaventate: imperoché se vi sforzarete, per lo avenire, di vivere come richiede alle vere spose del Salvatore, et servare questa Regola come via per laquale havete da caminare, et laquale è sta ordinata per utilità vostra, io ho ferma fede et speranza nella divina buontà che, non solamente superaremo tutti i pericoli et le difficili adversità, ma et anche, con grande gloria et gaudio nostro, ne saremo così vincitrici, che trapassaremo questa nostra brevissima vita sì consolatamente, che ogni nostro dolore et tristezza se volgerà in gaudio et allegrezza; et trovaremo che le strate spinose, erte, et sassose, farassi a noi floride, piane, gioconde, et di finissimo thesoro coperte. Imperoché gli angeli et i celesti chori saranno con noi, tanto quanto noi participaremo di vita angelica. Hor adonque, saggie sorelle, tutte di un pari volere abbrazziamo questa santa Regola, che Dio per sua gratia ne ha offerto. Et anche, armate di suoi sacri precetti, deportiamosi sì fattamente, che anco noi (come Judith troncò animosamente il capo ad Oloferne), troncando gli inganni del demonio, possiamo gloriosamente andar nella celeste patria, dil che da tutti in Ciel et terra gran gloria et triomfo ne sia per nascere. Hor tutte, adonque, per gratia de Dio, con desiderio et bramoso cuore state attente.

#### DEL MODO DEL RECEVER LE PUTTE

# Cap. II

Principalmente: se aricorda che, ciascuna che vorà entrar, o esser admessa in questa Compagnia, debba essere vergine. Doppo: così havendo ferma intentione di servir a Dio in tal sorte di vita, entrarà allegramente et di propria volontà. Terzo: che la non habbia fatta promissione a monesteri, et manco ad homini mondani. Quarto: se havrà padre, madre, o altri superiori, essa primamente gli dimandarà di ciò licentia, sì che le governatrici, et governatori della Compagnia anche essi parlaranno con loro, accioché non havessero causa alcuna legittima, se poi per caso volessero impedirla ad entrar sotto questa santa obedientia. Quinto: che la sia almen

di età de dodeci anni quando si presentarà, et anni quindeci quando sarà tolta in capitolo, et anni deceotto in vinti quando sarà scritta al libro autentico. Si ricorda però che quelle di menor età de anni XII ponno esser receute solamente per amaestrarle alla via di questa singolare vita.

#### DEL VESTIR DELLE VERGINI

### Cap. III

Se aricorda, anco, come i vestimenti debbano essere honesti et semplici, come veramente rechiede alla verginale honestà: sì che ciascuna vada vestita con busti serati convenientemente, et sopra portino veli, o velette di lino o bambaso non troppo sottile, et per niente trasparenti; et di tal sorte siano anco i panetti. Le veste denno essere di panno, o sarza, et di colore nero, o di taneto, o di beretino, o di morello scuri, sì come convenerà a ciascuna secondo la sua possibilità. Et vada cinta del cingulo di corio lungo, in segno sì di esteriore mortificatione, come de interiore et perfetta castità. Ma però se può portare quelle istesse veste, lequali esse sorelle havranno quando entrano in detta Regola; et portarà quelle tanto quanto dureran dette veste. Le pianelle, o zoccoli, et scarpe saranno nere, et di honesta forma, et semplici. Non portarà crespature alle camise, et finalmente non porti foggie, et varietà, et transparentie alcune, et altre vanità, che possiano macchiare la propria conscientia o del prossimo, o che siano contrarie alla verginale honestà.

### DELLA CONVERSATIONE NEL SECOLO

Cap. IIII

Oltre di ciò si aricorda che:

Primo: non si habbia pratica con donne di mala sorte. Secondo: che per niente si ascoltino ambasciate di homini o donne, specialmente in secreto. Terzo: che non si vada a nozze, né meno a balli, giostre, né ad altri simili spettacoli di piaceri mondani. Quarto: che fuggano di star a balconi, né manco su le porte et nelle strate, così sole come compagnate, per molti rispetti. Quinto: che, andando per le vie, vadino con gli occhii bassi et con i suoi panetti serati honestamente. Et vadan prestamente, non indugiando, né fermandosi qua o là per le vie, stando a mirar curiosamente cosa alcuna. Peroché in ogni loco vi sono molti pericoli, varie insidie et lazzi diabolici. Sesto: che se le madri, o altri suoi superiori mondani, le volessero indure a tali o simili pericoli, overamente impedirle dal digiuno, o oratione, et confessione, o daltra sorte di bene, esse presto lo referiscano alle governatrici della Compagnia, accioché esse gli provedano.

### **DEL DIGIUNO**

### Cap. V

Anche se aricorda che ciascuna debba, et voglia abbrazzare il digiuno corporale, come cosa necessaria, et come mezzo et via al vero digiuno spirituale, per il quale tutti li vitii et errori della mente si troncano. Et a questo ne invita chiaramente lo essempio di tutte le persone sante, et tutta la vita di Giesù Christo unica via al Cielo.

Onde la santa madre Chiesa questo palesamente nelle orechie de tutti li fideli intona così a Dio, dicendo: «Qui corporali ieiunio vitia comprimis, mentem elevas, virtutem largiris et praemia» etc. cioè; O Dio, il quale per il digiuno corporale refreni i vitii, inalci la mente, tu dai la virtù et premii etc. Sì come anche la gola fu origine de tutti i nostri mali, così il digiuno et astinentia convien che sia principio et mezzo de tutti i beni et profitti nostri spirituali. Però dicono i sacri Canonisti: «Indictum est ieiunium abstinentiae, lex a domino Deo, praevaricatio legis a diabolo»; cioè: è sta comandato dal signor Dio il digiuno et la legge di astinentia, ma la transgressione della legge è sta indutta dal demonio. Per il che essortemo ciascuna a degiunare

specialmente questi giorni del anno:

Primo: tutti quelli giorni che comanda la santa madre Chiesa, cioè tutta la quadragesima. Secondo: li quattro tempori, tutte le vigilie comandate, et tutto lo advento. Terzo: si digiuni, subito dopo la Epifania, quaranta giorni, non solo per domar i sensi, et gli apetitti, et le lascivie, che allhora specialmente pare che sortiscano più nel mondo; come anche per implorare, inanci al throno della divina Altezza, la misericordia per tante dissolutione, che in così fatti tempi da christiani sono comesse, come si fanno palese a tutti. Quarto: si digiuni, doppo la ottava di Pascha, trei giorni della settimana, cioè il mercori, venere, et il sabbato. Quinto: si digiuni i trei giorni delle rogationi o lettanie, che la santa Chiesa celebra avanti la Ascensione, per impetrare il divino aiuto per il populo christiano. Sesto: si digiuni doppo la Ascensione ogni giorno, et insieme si stia in oratione, con quanta forza di spirito si potrà, fina al giorno della missione del Spirito Santo, cioè fina a pascha di maggio, domandando con la vostra oratione quella grande promissione fatta da Giesù Christo alli suoi eletti et ben contritti. Settimo: si digiuni, doppo pascha di maggio, trei giorni della

Ma perché non si vole se non cose discrete, però si avertisse che niuna debba digiunare come di sopra (et specialmente i quaranta giorni doppo la Epifania) senza il consiglio speciale del suo padre spirituale et delle governatrici di essa Compagnia, le quali habbiano a sminuir essi digiuni sodetti, secondo che si vedrà il bisogno, perché chi indiscretamente afflige il suo corpo, dice la Scrittura: «Quod esset offerre holocaustum de rapina»; cioè: che saria un far sacrificio de robbaria, et questo af-

fermano i sacri canoni.

settimana, per fina allo advento.

#### **DELLA ORATIONE**

# Cap. VI

Se ricorda anche, che ciascuna sia sollecita alla oratione così mentale come vocale, laquale è compagna del digiuno; però dice la Scrittura: «Bona est oratio cum ieiuno»; cioè: buona è la oratione col digiuno. Et si legge nel sacro Evangelio di quella Anna, figliola di Phanuel, la quale, giorno et notte, sempre serviva a Dio nel tempio, con i digiuni et orationi. Onde, sì come per il digiuno se mortifica gli appetitti carnali et i proprii sensi, così per la oratione si impetra da Dio la vera gratia della vita spirituale. Il che, col spirito et con la mente, per il continuo bisogno che si ha del aiutto divino, bisogna sempre orare; per questo dice la Scritura: «Oportet semper orare»; cioè: bisogna sempre pregare. Tutta via, consigliemo anche la frequente oratione vocale, per la quale, eccitandosi i sensi corporei, si dispone alla mentale. Per il che ciascuna di voi voglia ogni giorno dir almeno lo Officio della Madonna, et i sette Psalmi penitentiali, con divotione et attentione. Imperoché, dicendo lo Officio si parla con Dio, sì come diceva il beato Alessandro martire. Onde, che questo Officio

non il saprà dire, sel faccia insignare dalle sorelle chel saperanno. Hor, adonque, quelle che non saranno leggere vogliano dire ogni giorno a Matutino trentatrei Pater noster, et trentatre Ave Maria per memoria delli trentatrei anni che Giesù Christo visse in questo mondo per amor nostro. Puoi a Prima dica sette Pater noster et sette Ave Maria, per li sette doni del Spirito Santo. Et simelmente tanti ne dica a cadauna delle altre hore canonice, cioè a Terza, Sesta, Nona, Vespro, et a Compieta. Et per dar materia, et qualche via ancor alla oratione mentale, essortemo ciascuna ad inalzar la mente a Dio, et ogni giorno essercitarse et così, o ad altro simil modo, nel secreto del cuor suo dire:

Signore mio, illumina le tenebre del cuor mio, et dammi gratia più presto di morire che mai offenda la tua divina Maestà. Assicura, Signore, i miei affetti et i miei sensi, che non prevaricheno in niun lato, né me rivoltino dalla lucidissima faccia tua, con la quale si contenta ogni cuor afflitto. Haimé dolente, che, intrando nel secreto del cuor mio, di vergogna non ardisco levar gli occhi al cielo, perché conoscomi degna da esser divorata così viva nel inferno. Et in oltre, vedendo in me tanti errori, brutezze, vituperii, et tante monstruose et spaventose fiere et figure, io son constretta, di et notte, andando, stando, operando, pensando, di inalzar al Cielo penetranti cridi, et domandar a te, Signor mio, misericordia et spatio di penitentia. Onde degnati, Signore, di perdonarmi le mie tante offese, et ogni mio fallo che mai habbia comesso fin ad hora, dal giorno del sacro battesmo. Degnate anche, Signor, di perdonar i peccati de mio padre et madre, et di miei parenti et amici, et de tutto il mondo: dilche te ne prego per la tua sacratissima passione, per il tuo precioso sangue sparso per amor nostro, per il tuo santo nome, Giesù, il quale sia benedetto in cielo et in terra, et fra tutti i celesti chori delli Angeli et Archangeli. Dogliomi haimé, Signor, che tanto habbia tardato ad incominciar a servir alla tua divina Maestà. Dhe, misera me, che fin hora non ho mai sparso pur una giozzola di sangue per amor tuo, et non son mai stata obediente a tuoi divini precetti, in modo che la adversità mi è stata aspra per il puoco amor mio verso te.

Signor, mi duole et mi creppa il cuore, di quelle meschine creature che, come cieche, non conoscano te, né si curano di essere participevoli della tua sacratissima passione; onde volontiera (se io potessi) spargerei il proprio sangue, pur che fusse bastevole per aprir la cecità delle loro menti. Però, Signor mio, unica vita et speranza mia, pregoti che tu te degni di recevere questo mio vilissimo et inmondo cuore, et abbrusiare da quello ogni suo cativo affetto et passione nella ardente fornace del

tuo divin amore.

Ti prego, Signor, che tu recevi il mio libero arbitrio, ogni mia propria voluntà, la

quale da sé, per esser infetta dal peccato, non sa discerner il bene dal male.

Per il che riceve, Signore, ogni mio pensar, parlar, operar, et finalmente ogni mia cosa, così interiore come esteriore: il che tutto offerisco avanti i piedi della tua divina Maestà, pregandoti che tu ti degni riceverlo, benché ne sia indegna. Amen.

### DEL ANDAR A MESSA OGNI GIORNO

### Cap. VII

Ancora ciascuna vada a Messa ogni giorno, et ne veda almen una intera, et lì stia con modestia et divotione, imperoché nella sacra Messa si ritrovan tutti i meriti della passione del nostro signor Giesù. Et quanto più si gli sta con maggior attentione,

fede, et contrittione, tanto più si participa di quei benedetti meriti et si riceve magiore consolatione. Anci, sarà un comunicarsi col spirito. Ma però si recorda a non indugiare troppo nelle chiese; ma (se voranno longamente orare) vada nelle sue camere, et ivi chiuse, oreno talmente et tanto quanto il spirito et conscientia gli dittaranno.

#### DELLA CONFESSIONE

### Cap. VIII

Si essorta ancora alla frequentatione della confessione, come necessaria medicina delle piag[h]e delle anime nostre. Imperoché giamai niun sarà giustificato dal peccato, se egli prima con la bocca non confessarà al sacerdote tutti i falli et errori suoi, come dice la Scrittura: «Dic tu prius iniquitates tuas, ut iustificeris»; cioè: di tu prima i tuoi peccati, accioché tu sia giustificato. Et la Verità dice a S. Pietro: «Tibi dabo claves regni caelorum; quodcunque ligaveris super terram, ligatum erit et in caelis, et quodcunque solveris super terram, erit solutum et in caelis»; cioè: io ti darò le chiavi del regno del Cielo, et ciò che havrai legato sopra la terra, sarà anche legato in Cielo; et ciò che havrai disciolto sopra la terra, così sarà disciolto in Cielo. Dove chiaramente si dimostra il peccato non poter esser tolto via se non per il sacerdote mediante la confessione. Perché a chi guisa potrà il sacerdote desligare il peccato che non sa? et a chi modo il potrà sapere, se non li vien manifestato da chi lha comesso, per bocca propria, conciosia che il peccato nascosto stia dentro nel petto? Ciascuna adonque voglia presentarsi avanti il sacerdote si come a Dio, eterno giudice, et ivi dolente, con sincera mente et vera conscientia, confessi il suo peccato et ne dimandi perdono, et sempre stia con timor et reverentia avanti il confessore ingenocchiata, fin che habbia receuta la assolutione. Sopra questo si fa sapere qualmente si ha da deputar un luogo, o chiesa speciale dove si ha da elegger un comune padre spirituale, prudente et di età maturo, alquale ciascuna voglia almeno una fiata il mese confessarsi; et poi ogni primo venere del mese congregarsi ad essa chiesa, et ivi tutte insieme communicarsi da esso padre. Oltre di questo, essortemo ciascuna confessarsi et communicarsi alla propria parocchia alle festività solenni.

### **DELLA OBEDIENTIA**

# Cap. IX

Essortemo ancora ciascuna a servar la santa obedientia, sola et vera negatione della propria voluntà, la quale è in noi a modo del tenebroso inferno. Però dice Giesù: «Non veni facere voluntatem meam, sed eius qui misit me Patris»; cioè: non son venuto per far il mio volere, ma quello del Padre mio chi mi ha mandato. Imperò la obedientia è nel homo a modo di una grande luce, che fa essere buona et accetta ogni opra; però si legge così: «Melius est obedire, quam sacrificare»; cioè: è meglio lo obedire che il sacrificare. Et dicono i sacri canoni: «Nullum bonum est extra obedientiam»; cioè: ogni cosa nostra, se debbe dire essere buona, bisogna che sia fatta sotto obedientia.

Per questo ciascuna di voi voglia obedire: prima, a i comandamenti divini, perché dice la Scrittura: «Maledictus qui declinat a mandatis tuis»; cioè: maledeto è quello che non serva i tuoi comandamenti. Secondariamente: obedire a quello che comanda la santa madre Chiesa; perché dice la Verità: «Qui vos audit, me audit, et qui vos spernit, me spernit»; cioè: chi alde voi, alde me, chi sprezza voi, sprezza me. Terzo: obedire al proprio episcopo et pastore, et al proprio padre spirituale, et alli governatori et governatrici della Compagnia. Quinto: obedire a i padri et madri, et altri superiori di casa, alli quali consigliemo domandar perdono una fiata la settimana per segno di sogettione, et conservatione della charità. Sesto: obedire ancora alle leggi et statuti de Signori, et alli governatori delle republiche. Et sopra tutto: obedire alli consigli et inspiratione, che di continuo ne manda il Spirito Santo nel cuore; la cui voce tanto più chiaramente aldiremo, quanto più purificata et monda havremo la conscientia. Perché il Spirito Santo è quello ilquale (come dice Giesù) «Docet nos omnem veritatem»; cioè: insegna a noi ogni verità.

Hor, ultimamente obedire a Dio, et ad ogni creatura per amor divino, come dice lo Apostolo, pur che non sia comandata cosa contra lo honor de Dio et della pro-

pria honestà.

### **DELLA VERGINITÀ**

### Cap. X

Ciascuna anco voglia conservare la sacra verginità, non già di ciò facendo voto per humana essortatione, ma voluntariamente facendo sacrificio a Dio del proprio cuore: perché la verginità (come dicono i canonisti) è sorella de tutti gli angeli, vittoria delli apetitti, regina delle virtù et posseditrice de tutti i beni. Però ognuna debbe così in ogni cosa deportarse, che non se cometta in se stessa, ne men nel cospetto del prossimo, cosa alcuna che sia indegna alle spose dello Altissimo. Sì che sopra il tutto tengasi il cuor puro et la conscientia monda da ogni cattivo pensier, da ogni ombra di invidia, malevolentia, discordia, cattiva sospettione, et da ogni altro cativo apetitto et voluntà. Ma che sia lieta, et sempre piena di carità, fede et speranza in Dio. Et la conversatione con il prossimo sia ragionevole, et modesta come dice S. Paulo: «Modestia vestra nota sit omnibus hominibus»; cioè: la modestia, costume, et la prudentia vostra sia palese a tutti; sì che ogni atto et parlare sia honesto et costumato, non nominando Dio in vano. Non giurando, ma solamente dicendo con modestia: no, no, sì, sì, come Giesù ne insegna. Non rispondendo superbamente. Non facendo le cose mal volentiera. Non stando adirata. Non mormorando. Non riportando cosa alcuna di male. Non, finalmente, facendo atto, né gesto alcuno, indegno specialmente di che ha nome di serve di Giesù Christo. Ma tutte le parole, et atti, et movimenti nostri, sempre siano in amaestramento et edificatione di chi arà pratica con noi, havendo sempre nel cuore la accesa charità. Più oltre, ciascuna voglia esser disposta più presto di morire, che mai consentire a macchiare così sacra gioia et thesoro.

#### DELLA POVERTÀ

### Cap. XI

Esortemo finalmente ciascuna ad abbrazzare la povertà, non solamente quella del effetto di cose temporali, ma sopra tutto la vera povertà di spirito, per la quale lo huomo si spoglia il cuore da ogni affetto, et speranza di cose create, transitorie, et di se stesso. Et in Dio ha ogni suo bene, et fuori di Dio si vede povero del tutto; et esser totalmente un niente, et con Dio haver il tutto. Però dice la Scritura: «beati pauperes spiritu quoniam ipsorum est regnum caelorum»; cioè: beati sono i poveri

di spirito, imperoché di essi è il regno di Cieli. Et per tanto ognuna si sforzi spoliarsi del tutto, et metter ogni suo bene, amore, et delettatione, non in robba, non in cibi, non in parenti, non in se stessa et alcuna sua propria provisione et sapere, ma in solo Dio, et in la sua sola benigna et ineffabile providentia. Però dice lo Evangelio: «Primum quaerite regnum Dei, et haec omnia apponentur vobis»; cioè: cercate prima il regno divino, et tutte queste altre cose vostre vi saranno anteposte. Et anche dice: «Nolite solliciti esse quod comedatis, neque quod bibatis; scit enim Pater vester quia his omnibus indigetis»; cioè: non vogliati esser solleciti in cercar che debbiate mangiare, né bere, perché il Padre vostro celeste sa ben, egli, che havete bisogno di tutte queste cose; come se dicesse: non vi affanate sopra cosa alcuna del bisogno temporale, imperoché Dio solo sa, può et vuole provedergli; il quale non vole se non il solo bene et gaudio vostro.

### **DEL GOVERNO**

### Cap. XII

Per governo di detta Compagnia, si dispone che si debba elezer quattro vergini delle più sufficienti della Compagnia, quattro (almen) matrone vedove prudenti et honeste di vita, et quattro homini maturi et di probata vita. Lequali vergini siano come maestre et guidatrici nella via et vita spirituale. Le matrone sodette siano come madri, ad esser solecite circa il bene et utilità delle figliole et sorelle spirituali. Et i quattro homini siano come agenti et padri circa le occorrenti necessità della Compagnia. In oltre vogliamo che le sodette quattro vergini specialmente habbiano questa impresa, cioè: di visitare, ogni quindeci giorni (o più, o men come si vedrà bastare), tutte le altre sorelle vergini, che sono per la città, per confortarle et aiutarle se esse fussero in qualche discordia o tribulatione, così corporale, come mentale; overo che li superiori suoi di casa gli facessero qualche ingiuria, o impedirle da qualche sorte di bene, o indurle a qualche pericolo di male; in modo che, se lor stesse non potesse provedergli, esse lo referiscano alle sodette matrone. Et se nanche esse li potranno riparargli, esse si vogliano convocare insieme con i quattro homini, accioché tutti insieme concorreno a dargli rimedio.

Secondo: se accadesse che alcuna di esse sorelle (per essere orfana) non potesse haver il suo, o che, essendo fantescha, o donzella, o ad altro modo, non potesse haver la sua mercede, o che gli accadesse altra cosa simile, onde bisognasse litigar, o mettere de accordo (il che è il megioe che far si possa), allhora essi quattro homini (per carità a guisa di padri) vogliano pigliar questa impresa, et soccorerla secondo il

bisogno.

Terzo: se alcuna delle persone del governo manchasse, o per morte, o per esser levata dal officio, allhora la Compagnia voglia congregarsi, et eleger altre persone per supplire il legittimo numero. Et anche se vene fusse che non potesse far il suo officio, o si deportasse male, quella persona sia dal governo remossa.

Quarto: se per voluntà et dispensatione divina venesse che in comune se havesse qualche dinari, o altra robba, se ricorda che se gli debba haver bon governo, et prudentemente si habbian a dispensare specialmente in soventione delle sorelle, et se-

condo ogni occorente bisogno.

Quinto: se fusse almen due delle sorelle rimaste sole, senza padre et madre, et altri superiori, allhora per carità gli sia tolta una casa a fitto (se pur esse non havranno) et siano sovenute nelli loro bisogni. Ma, rimanendone se non una sola, allhora

qualchuna delle altre la voglia recevere in casa, et gli sia data la soventione, che parerà a che governaranno. Ma però, se ella volesse andare a servir altrui per fantescha, o donzella, esse che governano ne habbiano cura, accioché la sia accordata con persone, dove possino stare bene et honestamente.

Sesto: se ne fussero de così vecchie, lequali per sé non potessero sostentarsi, queste vogliano per amor di Dio essere sovenute et governate, sì come vere spose di

Giesù.

Settimo: si ricorda che, se alcuna delle sorelle sarà infirma, che la sia visitata, sovenuta, et governata, de dì et notte, quanto sarà bisogno, et secondo la necessità. Et se fusse per morire, essa voglia lassare qualche cosa alla Compagnia in segno di amore et carità verso le sorelle.

Ultimamente: quando alcuna sarà morta, allhora tutte le altre la vogliano compagnare alla sepoltura, andando a due a due, con carità et con una candela in mano per una. Et che saprà leggere, dica lo Officio de morti; et chi non saprà leggere, dica trentatrei Pater noster, et tante Ave Maria, accioché, se quella anima fusse andata per qualche peccato nelle pene del purgatorio, il nostro dolce et benigno sposo Giesù Christo voglia dignarsi di cavarla, et condurla alla gloria celeste con le altre vergini, incoronata di quella aurea et trionfale corona verginale.

Il fine

### Confirmatio

Laurentius Mutius Juris utriusque Doctor in Episcopatu Brixiensi Reverendissimi in Christo patris, et Domini Domini Francisci miseratione divina tituli sanctae Praxedis, Sanctae Romanae Ecclesiae, et presbiteri Cardinalis Cornelii Episcopi, Brixiensis Ducis, Marchionis et Comitis, locumtenens, et vicarius generalis: visis, et perlectis suprascriptis capitulis, quia nihil invenimus in eis preter aut contra catholicam fidem. Iccirco instante Domina Angela huius societatis auctrice, auctoritate ordinaria, omnia et singula in eis contenta approbamus iuxta facultates, et licentiam publicandi, concedimus eadem auctoritate quadraginta dies indulgentiae in forma Ecclesiae consueta qualibet die quibuscunque praedicta servantibus; concedentes per praesentes manu nostra subscriptas, et appensione sigilli eiusdem Reverendissimi Domini Cardinalis munitas. In quorum fidem etc. Datum Brixiae in Episcopali pallatio die octavo Augusti 1536, indictione nona.

Laurentius qui supra Vicarius manu propria subscripsit.

Bernardinus de Boarno cancellarius mandavit.

### Concessio

Concedimus insuper dictis sororibus ut confiteri peccata sua, et sacramentum poenitentiae et sanctam Eucharistiam recipere possint quandocunque praeter quam in die Sanctae paschatis resurrectionis Domini Nostri Jesu Christi, vel quando sumsent in infirmitate pro viatico, quo tempore, et casu teneantur accedere ad proprias parochias vel ecclesiam Cathedralem et a suo Curato vel maiore ecclesiae sacramentum eucharistiae recipere, vel de dicti proprii sacerdotis, aut ordinarii licentia ceteris temporibus, et casibus, libere possint praedicta sacramenta a quocunque sacerdote, et ubicunque maluerint, alius tamen canonice recipere sine alia li-

centia alicuius personae. Datum in Episcopali pallatio Brixiae die. XXVII. mensis Septembris anno, et Indictione quibus supra.

Idem Laurentius qui supra Vicarius manu propria subscripsi.

### Confirmatio

Nos Joannes Petrus Ferretus Ravenas iuris utriusque Doctor, Dei, et Apostolicae [Sedis] gratia Milenensis Episcopus Reverendissimi ac Illustrissimi Domini Domini Andreae Cornelii Sancti Theodori Sanctae Romanae Ecclesiae diaconi Cardinalis Episcopi Ducis Marchionis et Comitis Brixiensis in pontificalibus suffraganeus et vicarius generalis etc. quia vidimus, legimus, et diligenter scrutati sumus Regulam bonae memoriae Dominae sororis Angelae sub vocabulo Divae Ursulae, virginitatem servantem in civitate Brixiensi in huiusmodi egregio consortio optineri, et observari debere: conoscentes devotionem Sanctae quondam Mulieris, et ea, quae in sancto hoc instituto reperiuntur bona re [sic] et iuxta ritum volentium spiritu adherere Deo saluti fidelium mulierum quam maxime expedire, cum ad catholicae fidei exultationem tendant. Idcirco laudamus, et approbamus singula in ea contenta auctoritate nostra qua fungimur, super addentes eadem auctoritate in omnibus festis diebus, perpetuis futurisque temporibus centum dies Indulgentiarum eisdem dicti consortii virginibus secundum ritum Ecclesiae. Omnes quoque alias gratias per praecessores nostros ipsis concessas confirmamus, et omni meliori modo corroboramus per praesentes, utque libere sacramenta omnia suscipere possint ubique, cum debitis honore, et reverentia, quocunque tempore absque tamen parochialis ecclesiae praeiudicio in finem vitae, gratiose indulgemus, et elargimur.

In quorum fidem has nostras literas manu nostra propria scripsimus, atque subscripsimus. Datum Brixiae in aedibus Episcopalibus die 19. Maii. 1545. sub fide

etiam sigilli nostri minoris. Idem Joannes Petrus qui supra et manu propria.

### Ordinatione

Noi Aurelio Durante Archidiacono et Donato Savallo Arciprete de la cathedral chiesa de Bressa conservatori apostolici, et ancora Lucretia Contessa di Lodrone Madre, et Gubernatrici della compagnia, et congregatione dele Vergine, et donne sotto al titulo di Santa Orsola di Bressa: Considerando che per li segni esteriori molte fiate se conosse la interiore spiritualita de la creatura in segno che siano de ditta congregatione, et de vera humiliatione et perfetta castita, statuimo et ordinamo, come ancora per la molta più maggiore parte de la confraternita et gubernatrici de ditta compagnia sotto al di undese Dicembrio. 1545. fu statuito et ordinato, et in essecutione de quella et de la Bolla Apostolica, che cadauna de ditta compagnia si de presente, come per lavenir debba portare uno cingulo de corio negro largo uno dita marmello vel circa, che significa vera continentia, et accio siano ancora conossute dale altre donne sotto pena de essere casse de ditta compagnia, et altre pene come se contiene in le dette Bolle Apostolice. Adi XX. Aprile. MDXLVI.

Ist est pro ut supra. Ego Aurelius Durantus Archidiaconus Brixiensis conserva-

tor Apostolicus manu propria me subscripsi in fidem praemissorum.

Ita est.Ego Donatus Savallus Archipresbiter Brixiensis et conservator Apostolicus manu propria supscripsi.

Sigillum Aurelii

Sigillum Donati

# 3. Regola

# codice trivulziano

# edizione Turlino

Regola della nova Compagnia di Santa Orsola di Brescia, per la quale si vede come si habbiano a governar le vergini di detta Compagnia accioché vivendo christianamente possino doppo la lor morte fruir i beni di vita eterna. In Brescia per Damiano Turlino.

#### INDICE DELLI CAPITTOLI DELLA REGOLA DELLA COMPAGNIA DI SANT'ORSOLA

### INDICE DELLA REGOLA DELLA COMPAGNIA

			cup.
Prologo a carte	I	Prologo	I
Del modo del ricever	III	Del modo del recevere le putte	II
Come debbano andar vestite	III	Del vestir delle vergini	III
Del modo del conversar		table states and the half around the state of	
nel secolo	IIII	Della conversatione nel secolo	IIII
Del digiuno	IIII	Del digiuno	V
Del'oratione	V	Della oratione	VI
Del'andar a messa ogni giorno	VII	Del andar a messa	VII
Della confessione	VII	Della confessione	VIII
Della obedientia	VIII	Della obedientia	IX
Della verginitade	VIIII	Della verginità	X
Della povertade	X	Della povertà	XI
Del governo		Del governo	

Nel nome della beata et individua Trinitade. Prologo sopra la vita de virgine, novamente principiata, che per nome si chiama Compagnia di Santa Orsola. Alle dilette figlie et sorelle dela Compagnia de Sant'Orsola.

Poi che, figliole et sorelle dilettissime, Dio vi ha concessa gratia de separarvi dalle tenebre de questo misero mondo, et unirve insiema a servir a sua divina Maiestade, haveti da ringratiarlo infiniNel nome della Santissima Trinità, comincia il prologo della vita delle vergini di novo principiata col nome della Compagnia di Santa Orsola, et ad essa dedicato.

### **PROEMIO**

### Cap. I

Poi che voi, figliole et sorelle mie dilettissime, Dio vi ha concessa gratia di separarvi dalle tenebre di questo misero mondo, et unirve insieme a servire a sua divina Maestà, haveti da renderli infini-

cap.

tamente, che a voi specialmente habbia concesso si singular duono. Imperoché quante persone grandi, et altre d'ogni condicione, che non hanno, né potran-

no haver tal gratia!

Onde, sorelle mie, ve essorto, anzi, tutte ve prego et supplico che, essendo state cossì ellette ad esser vere et intatte spose del Figliol di Dio, primo vogliate cognoscer che importa tal cosa, et che nuova et stupenda dignità sia questa.

Dapoi, che vi sforzati con ogni vostro potere de conservarvi secondo che da Dio chiamate seti, et cerchare et volere tutti quelli mezzi et vie che necessarie sono in perseverare et prosperare fina al fine. Imperoché non basta a incomminciare, se anche non se sarà perseverato. Onde dice la Verità: «Oui perseveraverit usque in finem, hic salvus erit»; chi insino al fine perseverato harà, quello salvo sarà.

Et anchor dice: «Beati qui audiunt verbum Dei et custodiunt illud»; cioè: beati sono quelli alli quali Dio harà inspirato nel cuore la luce di Verità, et gli haverà dato sentimento di bramare la lor patria celeste; et da poi cercaran di conservare tal voce di verità in se stesse. et bon desiderio.

Quella persona indubitatamente potrà conservarse, la quale anche vorà abrazzare li mezzi et le vie a ciò necessarie, imperoché puoca o nulla differentia è tra il dire liberamente: più non voglio servir a Dio et il non volere le vie et regole necessarie al poterse in ciò mantenere. Et tanto più, sorelle mie, bisogna che siamo vigilante, quanto la impresa è di tal importantia, che di mazzor esser non potria, dove va la vita et salute nostra, et dove siemo chiamate a tal gloria di vita, che spose del Figliol di Dio siamo, et in ciel regine diveniamo. Però accorte et prudenti qui esser bisogna; imperò che tanto mazzor faticha et pericote gratie, che a voi specialmente habbia concesso così singulare dono. Imperoché quante persone grandi saranno, cioè Imperatrici, Regine, Duchesse et simili, che per maggior sua felicità et lor gloria desideraranno di essere state una minima ancilla vostra, considerando la condittione vostra esser stata tanto più degna et megliore della sua. Onde, sorelle mie, vi essorto, anci vi prego che, essendo voi state elette ad esser vere et intatte spose del Figliolo di Dio, prima dico che vogliate conoscer quanto inporta tale cosa, et che nova et mirabile dignità sia questa. Doppo, che vi sforzate con ogni possibile vostro di conservarve secondo che da Dio sarete chiamate. Et cercarete di voler tutti quei mezzi et vie che sono necessarie per prosperare, et in ciò perseverare fin al fine. Imperoché non basta alcun principio senza perseveranza; perché dice la Scrittura: «Qui perseveraverit usque in finem, hic salvus erit»; cioè: chi havrà perseverato fin al fine, questo sarà salvo. Et anco dice: «Beati qui audiunt verbum Dei et custodiunt illud»; cioè: beati quelli, alli quali Dio havrà inspirato la luce di Verità, et gli haverà datto sentimento di bramar la loro celeste patria, et doppo cercar di conservare tal voce di verità et buon desiderio in se stesse.

Quella persona adonque potrà indubitatamente conservarse, la quale anche vorrà abbrazare i mezzi et vie a questo necessarie, imperoché puoca, o niuna differentia è fra il dire liberamente: più non voglio servir a Dio, et non voler le vie et regole pertinenti al poter in ciò mantenerse. Onde tanto più, sorelle mie, fa bisogno che siamo vigilanti, quanto la impresa è di tal importantia che magior essere non potria, dove va la vita et salute nostra, conciosia che siamo chiamate a tal gloria di vita, che siamo spose del Figliol di Dio, et in ciel gloriose regine. Però qui bisogna essere accorte et prudenti perché, quanto più fatica lo li convien che sia, quanto la impresa che se fa è di mazzor valore; perché non è sorte di male che qui non ce sia per opponersi, considerando che qui siemo poste nel mezzo delli lazzi et pericoli, sì che contra di noi se ha ad armare l'acqua, l'aer et la terra, con tutto l'inferno, perché già la carne et sensualitade nostra non è morta. Nanche l'adversario nostro, il diavolo, dorme; il qual mai non ripossa, ma sempre (come dice San Piero), a modo de leone che rugge, mira et cercha a che modo il possa divorare alcuna di noi, et con tante sue vie et astutie, che nesun le potria numerare.

Ma però, sorelle mie, per questo spaventar non ve doveti: imperoché, se vi sforzareti per l'avenire, a vostro gran potere, de viver sì come richiede alle vere spose del Altissimo, et servare questa Regola sì come via per la quale haveti a caminare, et la qual è stata composta per utilità vostra, io ho questa indubitata et ferma fede et speranza nella infinita bontà divina, che non solamente tutti li pericoli et adversitadi di facil superaremo, ma anchora con gran gloria et giubilatione nostra li venceremo. Anzi, trapassaremo questa nostra brevissima vita consolatamente, et ogni nostro dolore et tristezza se voltarà in gaudio et allegrezza, et trovaremo le strate spinose et sassose a noi floride et coperte di piastre de finissimo oro. Imperoché gli angeli di vita eterna saranno cum noi, ciò è tanto quanto participaremo di vita angelica. Horsù valente, adonque, tutte abbraciamo questa santa Regola, che Dio per sua gratia ne ha offerto. Et, armate de gli suoi sacri precetti, vogliamosi così virilmente diportare, che ancor noi, a modo dela santa Judith, tronchata animosamente la testa d'Oloferne, cioè del diavolo, gloriosamente nella patria ritornar possiamo, dove da tutti in Ciel et terra gran gloria et triompho ne sia per nascer. Hor tutte adoncha, di gratia, state attente con grande et bramoso cuore.

et pericolo li convien che sia, tanto più la impresa che si fa è di magior valore, conciosia che non è sorte di male che qui non sia per opponerse, considerando che siamo qui poste nel mezzo di lazzi et pericoli, perché, non essendo morta la carne et sensualità nostra, contra di noi si armaranno gli elementi et tutto lo inferno. Nanche il demonio adversario nostro, mai dormendo né ripossando, ma sempre (come dice S. Pietro) a guisa di leone ruggendo, mira et ricercha come possa divorare alcuna di noi, con le infinite sue vie et astutie, lequali tante sono che niun le potria racontare. Ma per questo, sorelle mie, non vi spaventate: imperoché se vi sforzarete, per lo avenire, di vivere come richiede alle vere spose del Salvatore, et servare questa Regola come via per laquale havete da caminare, et laquale è sta ordinata per utilità vostra, io ho ferma fede et speranza nella divina buontà che, non solamente superaremo tutti i pericoli et le difficili adversità, ma et anche, con grande gloria et gaudio nostro, ne saremo così vincitrici, che trapassaremo questa nostra brevissima vita sì consolatamente, che ogni nostro dolore et tristezza se volgerà in gaudio et allegrezza; et trovaremo che le strate spinose, erte, et sassose, farassi a noi floride, piane, gioconde, et di finissimo thesoro coperte. Imperoché gli angeli et i celesti chori saranno con noi, tanto quanto noi participaremo di vita angelica. Hor adonque, saggie sorelle, tutte di un pari volere abbrazziamo questa santa Regola, che Dio per sua gratia ne ha offerto. Et anche, armate di suoi sacri precetti, deportiamosi sì fattamente, che anco noi (come Judith troncò animosamente il capo ad Oloferne), troncando gli inganni del demonio, possiamo gloriosamente andar nella celeste patria, dil che da tutti in Ciel et terra gran gloria et triomfo ne sia per nascere.

Hor tutte, adonque, per gratia de Dio, con desiderio et bramoso cuore state attente.

#### DEL MODO DEL RICEVER

### Cap. I

Principalmente: se arricorda come ogn'una che haverà a intrare o esser admessa in questa Compagnia, debba esser vergine et habbia ferma intentione di servir a Dio in tal sorte di vita. Da poi: che la intre allegramente et di propria voluntade. Tertio: che la non habbia fatta promissione a monasterii et mancho a' homini mondani. Quarto: se l'haverà padre, o madre, o altri superiori, essa prima gli domande licentia, sì che le governatrici et governatori della Compagnia anchora essi parleno con loro a cioché non havesseno causa alcuna legitima se poi, per aventura, i volesseno impedirla a intrare sotto questa santa obedientia. Quinto: che la sia almancho di etade de dodeci anni. Sarricorda, però, che le di menore etade pono esser recevude in capitolo, per amaestrarle alla verità di questa singular vita.

# COME DEBBANO ANDAR VESTITE

### Cap. II

Ancora s'arricorda, sì come gli vestimenti et portadure debbano esser honeste et semplici, come veramente richiede la virginal honestade: sì che ogn'una vada vestita con gli busti serrati convenientemente, et sopra con gli veli, over velette di tela, come saria de lino, over bombaso non troppo sottile et per niente transparente; et di tal sorte siano ancora gli panetti. Hor le veste deno esser come saria di panno, o sarza, et di colore come saria di bruna, o de taneto oscuro, o de beretino, o de morello oscuro, sì come a cadauna, secondo la lor possibilità, convegnarà. Ma però se pono portare quelle stesse veste, le qua-

# DEL MODO DEL RECEVER LE PUTTE

### Cap. II

Principalmente: se aricorda che, ciascuna che vorà entrar, o esser admessa in questa Compagnia, debba essere vergine. Doppo: così havendo ferma intentione di servir a Dio in tal sorte di vita, entrarà allegramente et di propria volontà. Terzo: che la non habbia fatta promissione a monesteri, et manco ad homini mondani. Quarto: se havrà padre, madre, o altri superiori, essa primamente gli dimandarà di ciò licentia, sì che le governatrici, et governatori della Compagnia anche essi parlaranno con loro, accioché non havessero causa alcuna legittima, se poi per caso volessero impedirla ad entrar sotto questa santa obedientia. Quinto: che la sia almen di età de dodeci anni quando si presentarà, et anni quindeci quando sarà tolta in capitolo, et anni deceotto in vinti quando sarà scritta al libro autentico. Si ricorda però che quelle di menor età de anni XII ponno esser receute solamente per amaestrarle alla via di questa singolare vita.

# DEL VESTIR DELLE VERGINI

## Cap. III

Se aricorda, anco, come i vestimenti debbano essere honesti et semplici, come veramente rechiede alla verginale honestà: sì che ciascuna vada vestita con busti serati convenientemente, et sopra portino veli, o velette di lino o bambaso non troppo sottile, et per niente trasparenti; et di tal sorte siano anco i panetti. Le veste denno essere di panno, o sarza,et di colore nero, o di taneto, o di beretino, o di morello scuri, sì come convenerà a ciascuna secondo la sua possibilità. Et vada cinta del cingulo di corio lungo, in segno sì di esteriore mortificatione, come de interiore et perfetta castità. Ma però se può portare quelle istesse

le esse sorelle se inbatteno havere quando le intrano in detta Regola; però solamente tanto quanto esse veste duraranno, intendendo però che mai non ricchiede sorte alcuna di balzotti, né de bredoni a le manege, né sorte alcuna di tagliadure, né rechami et altri simili lavori. Et vadino cinti del cingulo de la cintura, in segno de exterior mortificatione et perfetta interior castitade. Non ricchiede seda, et mancho veludo, et argento, et oro; non pantofile et scarpe, se non come sarian negre et de forma honesta. Non velli et panetti coloridi, o di seda, o d'altra sorte, troppo sottili et transparenti; non crespadure alle camise. Non, finalmente, fozze et varietade et transparentie alcune, et altre vanitade che possiano macchiare la conscientia propria o del prossimo, et siano contrarie alla verginal honestade.

## DEL MODO DEL CONVERSAR NEL SECOLO

Cap. III

Oltra di questo, se arricorda: Primo: che non se habbia pratica con foemine di mala sorte. Da poi: che per niente se ascolteno imbassade de homini o de donne, specialmente in secreto. Tertio: che non se vada a nozze, et mancho a balli et giostre, et altri simili spettacoli de piaceri mondani. Quarto: che fuggano di stare a balchoni et mancho sule porte et nelle strade, né sole, né in compagnia, per molti rispetti. Quinto: che, andando per le strade, o vie, vadano con gli occhii bassi et serrate honestamente con gli suoi panetti et vadan prestamente, non induggiando, né fermandose o qui o lì, né stando a mirar curiosamente cosa alcuna. Imperoché da pertutto sono pericoli et varie insidie et lazzi diabolici. Sesto: che, se le madri, o altri superiori mondani, le volesseno indure a tali, o simili pericoli, over le volesseno impedire dal digiuno, o oratione, o confessioveste, lequali esse sorelle havranno quando entrano in detta Regola; et portarà quelle tanto quanto dureran dette veste. Le pianelle, o zoccoli, et scarpe saranno nere, et di honesta forma, et semplici. Non portarà crespature alle camise, et finalmente non porti foggie, et varietà, et transparentie alcune, et altre vanità, che possiano macchiare la propria conscientia o del prossimo, o che siano contrarie alla verginale honestà.

### DELLA CONVERSATIONE NEL SECOLO

Cap. IIII

Oltre di ciò si aricorda che:

Primo: non si habbia pratica con donne di mala sorte. Secondo: che per niente si ascoltino ambasciate di homini o donne, specialmente in secreto. Terzo: che non si vada a nozze, né meno a balli, giostre, né ad altri simili spettacoli di piaceri mondani. Quarto: che fuggano di star a balconi, né manco su le porte et nelle strate, così sole come compagnate, per molti rispetti. Quinto: che, andando per le vie, vadino con gli occhii bassi et con i suoi panetti serati honestamente. Et vadan prestamente, non indugiando, né fermandosi qua o là per le vie, stando a mirar curiosamente cosa alcuna. Peroché in ogni loco vi sono molti pericoli, varie insidie et lazzi diabolici. Sesto: che se le madri, o altri suoi superiori mondani, le volessero indure a tali o simili pericoli, overamente impedirle dal digiuno, o oratione, et confessione, o daltra sorte ne, o d'altra sorte di bene, esse presto lo referiscano a le governatrici della Compagnia, accioché esse gli provedano.

# DEL DIGIUNO Cap. IIII

Ancora se aricorda che ogn'una abbrazzar voglia anche il digiuno corporale, sì come cosa necessaria, et come mezzo et via al ver digiuno spirituale, per il qual tutti gli vitii et errori dala mente se tronchano. Et a questo ne invita chiarissimamente l'essempio di tutte le persone sante, et sopra tutto la vita di Giesù Christo, unica via al Cielo. Onde la santa madre Giesa questo palesamente nelle orecchie di tutti gli fedeli intona, così a Dio parlando: «Qui corporali ieiunio vitia comprimis, mentem elevas, virtutem largiris et praemia»; ciò è: Dio, il qual per il digiuno corporale refreni li vitii, inalzi la mente, dai la virtù et gli premii; imperoché sì come la gola fo origine di tutti li mali nostri, così il digiuno et astinentia convien che sia principio et mezzo de tutti gli beni et profetti nostri spirituali. Però dicono e' sacri canoniste: «Indictum est ieiunium abstinentiae, lex a Domino Deo, prevaricatio legis a diabolo»; ciò è: comandato è sta dal Signor Dio il digiuno, legge de astinentia, et la transgressione della legge è indutta dal diavolo. Per la qual cosa essortemo ogn'una a digiunare, specialmente questi giorni del anno:

Primo: tutti quelli che comanda la santa madre Giesa, ciò è tutta la quadragesima, li quatro tempori et tutte le vigilie comandate. Da poi: tutto l'advento. Tertio: se digiune subito doppo l'Epiphania quaranta giorni, per domar gli sensi et gli appetiti et lascivie, che allhora specialmente par che signorezzan nel mondo, et anchora per implorar inanzi al throno della divina Altezza misericordia per tante dissolutioni, che in così fatti tempi da christiani sono comesse, co-

di bene, esse presto lo referiscano alle governatrici della Compagnia, accioché esse gli provedano.

# DEL DIGIUNO

## Cap. V

Anche se aricorda che ciascuna debba, et voglia abbrazzare il digiuno corporale, come cosa necessaria, et come mezzo et via al vero digiuno spirituale, per il quale tutti li vitii et errori della mente si troncano. Et a questo ne invita chiaramente lo essempio di tutte le persone sante, et tutta la vita di Giesù Christo unica via al Cielo. Onde la santa madre Chiesa questo palesamente nelle orechie de tutti li fideli intona così a Dio, dicendo: «Qui corporali ieiunio vitia comprimis, mentem elevas, virtutem largiris et praemia» etc.; cioè: O Dio, il quale per il digiuno corporale refreni i vitii, inalci la mente, tu dai la virtù et premii etc. Sì come anche la gola fu origine de tutti i nostri mali, così il digiuno et astinentia convien che sia principio et mezzo de tutti i beni et profitti nostri spirituali. Però dicono i sacri Canonisti: «Indictum est ieiunium abstinentiae, lex a domino Deo, praevaricatio legis a diabolo»; cioè: è sta comandato dal signor Dio il digiuno et la legge di astinentia, ma la transgressione della legge è sta indutta dal demonio. Per il che essortemo ciascuna a degiunare specialmente questi giorni del anno:

Primo: tutti quelli giorni che comanda la santa madre Chiesa, cioè tutta la quadragesima. Secondo: li quattro tempori, tutte le vigilie comandate, et tutto lo advento. Terzo: si digiuni, subito dopo la Epifania, quaranta giorni, non solo per domar i sensi, et gli apetitti, et le lascivie, che allhora specialmente pare che sortiscano più nel mondo; come anche per implorare, inanci al throno della divina Altezza, la misericordia per tante dissolutione, che in così fatti tempi da

me è più che palese a tutti. Quarto: doppo l'ottava di Pascha se digiune tre giorni della settimana, ciò è il mercori, il venere et il sabbato. Quinto: se digiune gli tre giorni delle rogationi, over letanie, che la Giesa celebra avanti l'Asscensione, per implorare il divino aiuto per il popol christiano. Sesto: se digiune doppo l'Asscensione ogni giorno, et insiema se stie in oratione, con quanta forza de spirito se poterà, fina al giorno de la missione del Spirito Santo, ciò è fina a pascha di maggio, domandando quella gran promissione fatta da Giesù Christo a gli suo eletti et ben disposti. Settimo: doppo pascha di maggio se ritorne agli tre giorni sopradetti di la settimana fina a l'advento.

Ma perché non si vole se non cose discrete, però se admonisse che niuna debba digiunare senza il consilio specialmente del suo patre spirituale et delle governatrici di essa Compagnia, le quale habbiano a relentare et sminuire essi digiunii, secondo che esser bisogno se vederà, perché chi indiscretamente affligesse il suo corpo, «Esset offerre holocaustum de rapina»; ciò è sarìa far sacrificio di robbaria, sì come dicono ancora gli sacri canoni.

# DE L'ORATIONE Cap. V

Se arricorda ancora che ogn'una sia sollecita all'oratione così mentale come vocale, la quale è compagna del digiuno; perho dice la Scrittura: «Bona est oratio cum ieiunio»; ciò è: bona è l'oratione col digiuno. Et se legge nel Evangelio di quella Anna, figlia di Phanuel, la quale nel tempio dì e notte di continuo serviva a Dio in ieiunits et orationibus. Imperoché, sì come per il digiuno se mortifica gli appetiti dela carne et proprii senti-

christiani sono comesse, come si fanno palese a tutti. Quarto: si digiuni, doppo la ottava di Pascha, trei giorni della settimana, cioè il mercori, venere, et il sabbato. Quinto: si digiuni i trei giorni delle rogationi o lettanie, che la santa Chiesa celebra avanti la Ascensione, per impetrare il divino aiuto per il populo christiano. Sesto: si digiuni doppo la Ascensione ogni giorno, et insieme si stia in oratione, con quanta forza di spirito si potrà, fina al giorno della missione del Spirito Santo, cioè fina a pascha di maggio, domandando con la vostra oratione quella grande promissione fatta da Giesù Christo alli suoi eletti et ben contritti. Settimo: si digiuni, doppo pascha di maggio, trei giorni della settimana, per fina allo advento.

Ma perché non si vole se non cose discrete, però si avertisse che niuna debba digiunare come di sopra (et specialmente i quaranta giorni doppo la Epifania) senza il consiglio speciale del suo padre spirituale et delle governatrici di essa Compagnia, le quali habbiano a sminuir essi digiuni sodetti, secondo che si vedrà il bisogno, perché chi indiscretamente afflige il suo corpo, dice la Scrittura: «Quod esset offerre holocaustum de rapina»; cioè: che sarìa un far sacrificio de robbaria, et questo affermano i sacri canoni.

# DELLA ORATIONE Cap. VI

Se ricorda anche, che ciascuna sia sollecita alla oratione così mentale come vocale, laquale è compagna del digiuno; però dice la Scrittura: «Bona est oratio cum ieiuno»; cioè: buona è la oratione col digiuno. Et si legge nel sacro Evangelio di quella Anna, figliola di Phanuel, la quale, giorno et notte, sempre serviva a Dio nel tempio, con i digiuni et orationi. Onde, sì come per il digiuno se mortifica gli appetitti carnali et i proprii sen-

menti, così per l'oratione se impetra da Dio la gratia della vita spirituale. Et benché col spirito et con la mente bisogna sempre orare, per il continuo bisogno che se ha del aiuto di Dio; et per questo dice la Verità: «Oportet semper orare»; ciò è: bisogna sempre orare. Tutta via consigliemo ancora la frequente oratione vocale, per la quale se excitano li sentimenti corporei et se dispone alla mentale. Per la qual cosa ogn'una voglia ogni giorno dire almancho l'Officio della Madonna et li sette Psalmi penitentiali con devotione et attentione. Imperoché dicendo l'Officio se parla con Dio, come anche diceva il beato Allessandro martire. Et chi nol'sapran dire, sel'faccian insignare dalle sorelle chel saperanno. Hor, quelle che non sapran leggere, vogliano dire ogni giorno a Matutino trentatre Pater Noster et trentatre Ave Maria, per memoria de gli trentatre anni che Giesù Christo visse in questo mondo per amor nostro. Poi, a Prima dica sette Pater Noster et sette Ave Maria per li sette duoni del Spirito Santo. Et similmente tanti ne dica a cadauna delle altre hore canonice, ciò è a Terza, a Sesta, a Nona, a Vespro et a Compieta. Et per dar materia et qualche via ancor all'oratione mentale, essortemo ogn'una ad inalzar le mente a Dio, et per ogni giorno essercitarse et così, o ad altro, o simil modo, nel secreto del cor suo dire:

si, così per la oratione si impetra da Dio la vera gratia della vita spirituale. Il che, col spirito et con la mente, per il continuo bisogno che si ha del aiutto divino, bisogna sempre orare; per questo dice la Scritura: «Oportet semper orare»; cioè: bisogna sempre pregare. Tutta via, consigliemo anche la frequente oratione vocale, per la quale, eccitandosi i sensi corporei, si dispone alla mentale. Per il che ciascuna di voi voglia ogni giorno dir almeno lo Officio della Madonna, et i sette Psalmi penitentiali, con divotione et attentione. Imperoché, dicendo lo Officio si parla con Dio, sì come diceva il beato Alessandro martire. Onde, che questo Officio non il saprà dire, sel faccia insignare dalle sorelle chel saperanno. Hor, adonque, quelle che non saranno leggere vogliano dire ogni giorno a Matutino trentatrei Pater noster, et trentatre Ave Maria per memoria delli trentatrei anni che Giesù Christo visse in questo mondo per amor nostro. Puoi a Prima dica sette Pater noster et sette Ave Maria, per li sette doni del Spirito Santo. Et simelmente tanti ne dica a cadauna delle altre hore canonice, cioè a Terza, Sesta, Nona, Vespro, et a Compieta. Et per dar materia, et qualche via ancor alla oratione mentale, essortemo ciascuna ad inalzar la mente a Dio, et ogni giorno essercitarse et così, o ad altro simil modo, nel secreto del cuor suo dire:

Signor mio, illumina le tenebre del cuor mio, et dammi gratia più presto di morire, che mai hoggi offenda la tua divina Maestade. Et assegura i miei affetti et sensi, che non prevariccheno né a destra, né a sinistra, né me rivoltino dalla lucidissima faccia tua, che contenta ogni cuor afflitto. Haimé dolente che, intrando nel secreto del cuor mio, di vergogna non ardisco levar gli occhii al cielo, che

Signore mio, illumina le tenebre del cuor mio, et dammi gratia più presto di morire che mai offenda la tua divina Maestà. Assicura, Signore, i miei affetti et i miei sensi, che non prevaricheno in niun lato, né me rivoltino dalla lucidissima faccia tua, con la quale si contenta ogni cuor afflitto. Haimé dolente, che, intrando nel secreto del cuor mio, di vergogna non ardisco levar gli occhi al

son degna da esser divorata così viva nel inferno, vedendo in me tanti errori, tante brutezze et vituperii, tante monstruose et spaventose fiere et figure. Onde son constretta, di et notte, andando, stando, operando, pensando, di proclamare et gittar cridi al Cielo, et domandar misericordia et spatio di penitentia. Degnati, o benignissimo Signore, di perdonarmi tante offese, et ogni mio fallo che mai habbia comesso fin hora, dal giorno del santo battesmo. Degnati di perdonare gli peccati, haimé, ancora de mio patre et matre, e di miei parenti et amici, et de tutto il mondo. Io tene prego, per la tua sacratissima passione, et sangue precioso sparso per amor nostro, per il tuo santo nome, il qual sia benedetto sopra l'arena del mare, sopra le giozze delle acque, sopra la moltitudine delle stelle. Mi doglio che sia stata tanto tarda a incominciare a servire alla tua divina Maestade. Haimé, fin hora non ho mai sparso pur una giozzetta di sangue per amor tuo; nanche mai son stata obediente a tuoi divini precetti, et ogni adversitade me stata aspera per il puocho amore tuo.

Signor, in luoco de quelle meschine creature che non te cognoscono, né si curano d'esser participevoli della tua sacratissima passione, mene crappa il cuore, et volentiera (s'io potesse) spargerei il proprio sangue per aprire la cecitade de le lor menti. Però, Signor mio, unica vita et speranza mia, ti prego che tu te degni de recever questo mio vilissimo et immondo cuore, et abbrusciare ogni suo affetto et passione nell'ardente fornace del tuo divin amore.

Ti priego che tu ricevi il mio libero arbitrio, ogni mia propria voluntade, la quale da sé, per esser infetta dal peccato, non sa discerner il bene dal male. cielo, perché conoscomi degna da esser divorata così viva nel inferno. Et in oltre, vedendo in me tanti errori, brutezze, vituperii, et tante monstruose et spaventose fiere et figure, io son constretta, di et notte, andando, stando, operando, pensando, di inalzar al Cielo penetranti cridi, et domandar a te, Signor mio, misericordia et spatio di penitentia. Onde degnati, Signore, di perdonarmi le mie tante offese, et ogni mio fallo che mai habbia comesso fin ad hora, dal giorno del sacro battesmo. Degnate anche, Signor, di perdonar i peccati de mio padre et madre, et di miei parenti et amici, et de tutto il mondo: dilche te ne prego per la tua sacratissima passione, per il tuo precioso sangue sparso per amor nostro, per il tuo santo nome, Giesù, il quale sia benedetto in cielo et in terra, et fra tutti i celesti chori delli Angeli et Archangeli. Dogliomi haimé, Signor, che tanto habbia tardato ad incominciar a servir alla tua divina Maestà. Dhe, misera me, che fin hora non ho mai sparso pur una giozzola di sangue per amor tuo, et non son mai stata obediente a tuoi divini precetti, in modo che la adversità mi è stata aspra per il puoco amor mio verso te.

Signor, mi duole et mi creppa il cuore, di quelle meschine creature che, come cieche, non conoscano te, né si curano di essere participevoli della tua sacratissima passione; onde volontiera (se io potessi) spargerei il proprio sangue, pur che fusse bastevole per aprir la cecità delle loro menti. Però, Signor mio, unica vita et speranza mia, pregoti che tu te degni di recevere questo mio vilissimo et inmondo cuore, et abbrusiare da quello ogni suo cativo affetto et passione nella ardente fornace del tuo divin amore.

Ti prego, Signor, che tu recevi il mio libero arbitrio, ogni mia propria voluntà, la quale da sé, per esser infetta dal peccato, non sa discerner il bene dal male. Riceve ogni mio pensar, parlar et operare; ogni mia cosa, finalmente, così interiore come exteriore: il che tutto offerisco avanti e'piedi della tua divina Maestade. Et ti priego che tu te degne de riceverlo, benché ne sia indegna. Amen.

## DEL ANDAR A MESSA OGNI GIORNO

### Cap. VI

Ancor ogn'una vada a Messa ogni giorno, et ne vedda almancho una integra, et se gli stie con modestia et devotamente, imperoché nella sacra Messa se ritrovan tutti gli meriti della passione del Signor nostro. Et quanto più se gli sta con maggior attentione, fede et contritione, tanto più se participa de quei benedetti meriti et se riceve mazzor consolatione. Anzi, sarà un communicarse col spirito. Ma perho s'arricorda a non induggiar troppo nelle giese; ma (se voranno più longamente orare) vadan nelle sue camere, et ivi chiuse, oreno qualmente et quanto il spirito et conscientia dittaranno.

#### **DELLA CONFESSIONE**

### Cap. VII

Se essorta ancora al frequentare la confessione, necessaria medicina delle piaghe dell'anime nostre. Imperoché già mai niuno sarà giustificato dal peccato, se egli prima con la boccha non confessarà al sacerdote gli suoi falli, come dice la Scrittura: «Dic tu prius iniquitates tuas, ut justificeris»; ciò è: di tu prima li tuoi peccati, acioché tu sia giustificato. Et la Verità dice a San Piero: «Tibi dabo claves regni caelorum, et quodcumque ligaveris super terram, erit ligatum et in caelis; et quodcumque solveris super terram, erit solutum et in caelis»; ciò è: io ti darò le chiave del reame del Cielo. e qualunche harai legato sopra la terra sarà legato ancora in Cielo, e qualunche

Per il che riceve, Signore, ogni mio pensar, parlar, operar, et finalmente ogni mia cosa, così interiore come esteriore: il che tutto offerisco avanti i piedi della tua divina Maestà, pregandoti che tu ti degni riceverlo, benché ne sia indegna. Amen.

### DEL ANDAR A MESSA OGNI GIORNO

### Cap. VII

Ancora ciascuna vada a Messa ogni giorno, et ne veda almen una intera, et lì stia con modestia et divotione, imperoché nella sacra Messa si ritrovan tutti i meriti della passione del nostro signor Giesù. Et quanto più si gli sta con maggior attentione, fede, et contrittione, tanto più si participa di quei benedetti meriti et si riceve magiore consolatione. Anci, sarà un comunicarsi col spirito. Ma però si recorda a non indugiare troppo nelle chiese; ma (se voranno longamente orare) vada nelle sue camere, et ivi chiuse, oreno talmente et tanto quanto il spirito et conscientia gli dittaranno.

#### **DELLA CONFESSIONE**

### Cap. VIII

Si essorta ancora alla frequentatione della confessione, come necessaria medicina delle piag[h]e delle anime nostre. Imperoché giamai niun sarà giustificato dal peccato, se egli prima con la bocca non confessarà al sacerdote tutti i falli et errori suoi, come dice la Scrittura: «Dic tu prius iniquitates tuas, ut iustificeris»; cioè: di tu prima i tuoi peccati, accioché tu sia giustificato. Et la Verità dice a S. Pietro: «Tibi dabo claves regni caelorum; quodcunque ligaveris super terram, ligatum erit et in caelis, et quodcunque solveris super terram, erit solutum et in caelis»; cioè: io ti darò le chiavi del regno del Cielo, et ciò che havrai legato sopra la terra, sarà anche legato in

harai deslegato sopra la terra sarà deslegato ancor in Cielo. Dove chiaramente se dimostra il peccato non poter esser tolto via se non per il sacerdote et per la confessione. Per che: a che fozza il sacerdote potrà il peccato desligare, se nol lo saperà? Et a che modo il potral sapere, se quello che la comesso, esso non lo manifeste con la propria boccha, conciosia cosa ch'el peccato ascoso stia dentro n'el petto? Ogn'una adoncha voglia presentarsi avanti il sacerdote, sì come avanti Dio eterno giudice, et ivi dolente, schiettamente et in verità di conscientia, confesse il suo peccato et ne domandi perdonanza, et sempre con timore et reverentia stia sotto al confessore, fin che habbia receuta l'absolutione. Sopra questo se fa sapere qualmente se ha a deputare un luoco, o giesa certa, dove se ha da elezzer un commune padre spirituale prudente et maturo di etade, al qual'ogn'una voglia almancho una volta il mese confessarsi; et poi, ogni primo vener del mese congregarsi ad essa giesa, et ivi tutte insiema communicarsi da esso prefato padre. Oltra di questo, essortemo ogn'una confessarsi et communicarsi alla propria parochia alle feste so-

# DELLA OBEDIENTIA Cap. VIII

Se essorta ancora ogn'una a servare la santa obedientia, sola vera abnegatione della propria voluntade, la qual è in noi a modo del tenebroso inferno. Però dice Giesù Christo: «Non veni facere voluntatem meam, sed eius, qui misit me Pater»; ciò è: non son venuto per far il mio voler, ma quello del Padre che m'ha mandato. Imperoché l'obedientia è nel homo a modo d'una gran luce, che fa ogni opra esser buona et accetta; onde se legge: «Melius est obedire, quam sacrificare»; ciò è: meglio è l'obedire che il sacrificare. Et gli sacri canoni dicono:

Cielo; et ciò che havrai disciolto sopra la terra, così sarà disciolto in Cielo. Dove chiaramente si dimostra il peccato non poter esser tolto via se non per il sacerdote mediante la confessione. Perché a chi guisa potrà il sacerdote desligare il peccato che non sa? et a chi modo il potrà sapere, se non li vien manifestato da chi lha comesso, per bocca propria, conciosia che il peccato nascosto stia dentro nel petto? Ciascuna adonque voglia presentarsi avanti il sacerdote si come a Dio, eterno giudice, et ivi dolente, con sincera mente et vera conscientia, confessi il suo peccato et ne dimandi perdono, et sempre stia con timor et reverentia avanti il confessore ingenocchiata, fin che habbia receuta la assolutione. Sopra questo si fa sapere qualmente si ha da deputar un luogo, o chiesa speciale dove si ha da elegger un comune padre spirituale, prudente et di età maturo, alquale ciascuna voglia almeno una fiata il mese confessarsi; et poi ogni primo venere del mese congregarsi ad essa chiesa, et ivi tutte insieme communicarsi da esso padre. Oltre di questo, essortemo ciascuna confessarsi et communicarsi alla propria parocchia alle festività so-

# DELLA OBEDIENTIA Cap. IX

Essortemo ancora ciascuna a servar la santa obedientia, sola et vera negatione della propria voluntà, la quale è in noi a modo del tenebroso inferno. Però dice Giesù: «Non veni facere voluntatem meam, sed eius qui misit me Patris»; cioè: non son venuto per far il mio volere, ma quello del Padre mio chi mi ha mandato. Imperò la obedientia è nel homo a modo di una grande luce, che fa essere buona et accetta ogni opra; però si legge così: «Melius est obedire, quam sacrificare»; cioè: è meglio lo obedire che il sacrificare. Et dicono i sacri cano-

«Nullum bonum est extra obedientiam»; ciò è: ogni cosa nostra, se dee essere bona, bisogna che sia fatta sotto obedientia.

Per questo ogn'una voglia obedire: primo a gli comandamenti di Dio, imperoché dice la Scrittura: «Maledictus, qui declinat a mandatis tuis»; ciò è: maledetto è quello che non serva i toi commandamenti. Da poi: a qu[e]llo che commanda la santa madre Giesa, per che dice la Verità: «Oui vos audit, me audit, et qui vos spernit, me spernit»; ciò è: che alde voi, alde mi; chi sprezza voi, sprezza mi. Tertio: obedire al proprio episcopo et pastore, et al proprio padre spirituale. Et alli governatori et governatrice della Compagnia. Più oltra: obedire alli padri et matre, et altri superiori di casa, alli quali consiglieno domandar perdonanza una volta la settimana per segno de suggiettione et conservatione della charità. Obedire ancora alle leggi et statutti de Signori, et alli governatori delle republice. Et sopra tutto: obedire a gli consiglii et inspiratione che di continuo ne manda il Spirito Santo nel cuore; la cui voce tanto più chiaramente aldiremo, quanto più purificata et monda haveremo la conscientia. Imperoché il Spirito Santo è quello il qual (come dice Giesù Christo) «Docet nos omnem veritatem»; ciò è: insegna a noi ogni verità.

Hor, in conclusione: obedire a Dio, et a ogni creatura per amor de Dio, come dice l'Apostolo, pur che non ce sia comandata cosa alcuna contra l'honor di Dio et della propria honestate.

# DELLA VERGINITADE Cap. VIIII

Ogn'una ancora voglie conservare la sacra virginitade, non già di ciò facciando voto per essortatione homana, ma voluntariamente facciando a Dio sacrificio del proprio cuore. Imperoché la virginitade (come dicono ancora gli canoni: «Nullum bonum est extra obedientiam»; cioè: ogni cosa nostra, se debbe dire essere buona, bisogna che sia fatta sotto obedientia.

Per questo ciascuna di voi voglia obedire: prima, a i comandamenti divini, perché dice la Scrittura: «Maledictus qui declinat a mandatis tuis»; cioè: maledeto è quello che non serva i tuoi comandamenti. Secondariamente: obedire a quello che comanda la santa madre Chiesa; perché dice la Verità: «Qui vos audit, me audit, et qui vos spernit, me spernit»; cioè: chi alde voi, alde me, chi sprezza voi, sprezza me. Terzo: obedire al proprio episcopo et pastore, et al proprio padre spirituale, et alli governatori et governatrici della Compagnia. Quinto: obedire a i padri et madri, et altri superiori di casa, alli quali consigliemo domandar perdono una fiata la settimana per segno di sogettione, et conservatione della charità. Sesto: obedire ancora alle leggi et statuti de Signori, et alli governatori delle republiche. Et sopra tutto: obedire alli consigli et inspiratione, che di continuo ne manda il Spirito Santo nel cuore; la cui voce tanto più chiaramente aldiremo, quanto più purificata et monda havremo la conscientia. Perché il Spirito Santo è quello ilquale (come dice Giesù) «Docet nos omnem veritatem»; cioè: insegna a noi ogni verità.

Hor, ultimamente obedire a Dio, et ad ogni creatura per amor divino, come dice lo Apostolo, pur che non sia comandata cosa contra lo honor de Dio et della propria honestà.

### DELLA VERGINITÀ Cap. X

Ciascuna anco voglia conservare la sacra verginità, non già di ciò facendo voto per humana essortatione, ma voluntariamente facendo sacrificio a Dio del proprio cuore: perché la verginità (come dicono i canonisti) è sorella de niste) è sorella de tutti gli angeli, vittoria delli appetiti, regina delle vertute, et che possiede tutti gli beni. Però ogn'una dee così in ogni cosa deportarse, che non se cometta né in se stessa, né in conspetto del prossimo, cosa alcuna che sia indegna di spose del Altissimo. Sì che sopra tutto se tenga il cuor puro et la conscientia monda da ogni cativo pensier, da ogni ombra d'invidia et malivolentia, da ogni discordia et mala sospitione, et da ogni altro cativo appetito et voluntade. Ma sia lieta et sempre piena di caritade, et fede, et speranza in Dio. Et la conversatione col prossimo sia ragionevole et modesta, come dice San Paolo: «Modestia vestra nota sit omnibus hominibus»; ciò è: la costumezza et prudentia vostra sia palesa a tutti, sì che ogni atto et parlare sia honesto et costumato. Non nominando Dio vanamente. Non giurando, ma solamente dicendo con modestia: sì, sì, over: no, no, come Giesù Christo insegna. Non rispondendo superbamente. Non facciando le cose malvolentiera. Non stando adirata. Non mormorando. Non riportando cosa alcuna di male. Non, finalmente, facciando atto, né gesto alcuno, indegno specialmente di chi ha nome di serve di Giesù Christo. Ma tutte le parolle, atti et movimenti nostri sempre sian in amaistramento et edificatione de chi harà pratica con noi, habbiando sempre nel cuore l'abbrasciata caritade. Più oltra, ogn'una voglie esser disposta più presto di morire, che mai consentire a macchiare et profanare così sacra gioia.

# DELLA POVERTADE Cap. X

Essorteremo finalmente ogn'una ad abbrazzare la povertade, non solamente quella del effetto de cose temporale, ma sopra tutto la vera povertà di spirito, per la quale l'homo se spoglia il cuore d'ogni affetto et speranza di cose create,

tutti gli angeli, vittoria delli apetitti, regina delle virtù et posseditrice de tutti i beni. Però ognuna debbe così in ogni cosa deportarse, che non se cometta in se stessa, ne men nel cospetto del prossimo, cosa alcuna che sia indegna alle spose dello Altissimo. Sì che sopra il tutto tengasi il cuor puro et la conscientia monda da ogni cattivo pensier, da ogni ombra di invidia, malevolentia, discordia, cattiva sospettione, et da ogni altro cativo apetitto et voluntà. Ma che sia lieta, et sempre piena di carità, fede et speranza in Dio. Et la conversatione con il prossimo sia ragionevole, et modesta come dice S. Paulo: «Modestia vestra nota sit omnibus hominibus»; cioè: la modestia, costume, et la prudentia vostra sia palese a tutti; sì che ogni atto et parlare sia honesto et costumato, non nominando Dio in vano. Non giurando, ma solamente dicendo con modestia: no, no, sì, sì, come Giesù ne insegna. Non rispondendo superbamente. Non facendo le cose mal volentiera. Non stando adirata. Non mormorando. Non riportando cosa alcuna di male. Non, finalmente, facendo atto, né gesto alcuno, indegno specialmente di che ha nome di serve di Giesù Christo. Ma tutte le parole, et atti, et movimenti nostri, sempre siano in amaestramento et edificatione di chi arà pratica con noi, havendo sempre nel cuore la accesa charità. Più oltre, ciascuna voglia esser disposta più presto di morire, che mai consentire a macchiare così sacra gioia et thesoro.

# DELLA POVERTÀ

# Cap. XI

Esortemo finalmente ciascuna ad abbrazzare la povertà, non solamente quella del effetto di cose temporali, ma sopra tutto la vera povertà di spirito, per la quale lo huomo si spoglia il cuore da ogni affetto, et speranza di cose create, et di si stesso. Et in Dio ha ogni suo bene, et fuora di Dio se vede povero del tutto, et esser totalmente un niente, et con Dio haver il tutto. Però dice la Verità: «Beati pauperes spiritu, quoniam ipsorum est regnum caelorum»; ciò è: beati son gli poveri de spirito, imperoché de lor è il reame del Cielo. Et per tanto ogn'una se sforze spogliarsi del tutto, et metter ogni suo bene, et amore, et delettatione, non in robba, non in cibi et golla, non in parenti et amici, non in si stessa et alcuna sua propria provisione et sapere, ma in solo Dio, et in la lui sola benigna et ineffabil providentia. Però dice l'Evangelio: «Primum quaerite regnum Dei, et haec omnia apponentur vobis»; ciò è: cercate prima il reame di Dio, e queste altre tutte vostre cose vi saran messe inanzi. Et ancor dice: «Nolite solliciti esse, quod comedatis, neque quod bibatis: scit enim Pater vester quia his omnibus indigetis»; ciò è: non vogliati esser solleciti in cercar che debbiati mangiar, nanche che debbiati bever, imperoché il Padre vostro celeste egli ben sa che haveti debisogno de tutte queste cose; come se chiaramente dicesse: non ve affanati sopra cosa alcuna di bisogno temporale, imperoché Dio egli solo sa, po et vole provedergli; il qual non vole se non il solo bene et gaudio vostro.

# DEL GOVERNO Cap. XI

Per governare detta Compagnia se dispone che se debba elezzere quatro vergini delle più sufficiente della Compagnia, et almancho quatro matroni vedove prudenti et honeste de vita, et quatro homini maturi et di vita probata. Le qual vergini siano come maestre et guidatrice nella vita spirituale. Et le vedove sian come matre a esser sollecete circa il bene et utilitade delle sorelle et figlie spirituale. Et gli quatro homini siano come agenti et patri ancora circa l'occurtransitorie, et di se stesso. Et in Dio ha ogni suo bene, et fuori di Dio si vede povero del tutto; et esser totalmente un niente, et con Dio haver il tutto. Però dice la Scritura: «beati pauperes spiritu quoniam ipsorum est regnum caelorum»; cioè: beati sono i poveri di spirito, imperoché di essi è il regno di Cieli. Et per tanto ognuna si sforzi spoliarsi del tutto, et metter ogni suo bene, amore, et delettatione, non in robba, non in cibi, non in parenti, non in se stessa et alcuna sua propria provisione et sapere, ma in solo Dio, et in la sua sola benigna et ineffabile providentia. Però dice lo Evangelio: «Primum quaerite regnum Dei, et haec omnia apponentur vobis»; cioè: cercate prima il regno divino, et tutte queste altre cose vostre vi saranno anteposte. Et anche dice: «Nolite solliciti esse quod comedatis, neque quod bibatis; scit enim Pater vester quia his omnibus indigetis»; cioè: non vogliati esser solleciti in cercar che debbiate mangiare, né bere, perché il Padre vostro celeste sa ben, egli, che havete bisogno di tutte queste cose; come se dicesse: non vi affanate sopra cosa alcuna del bisogno temporale, imperoché Dio solo sa, può et vuole provedergli; il quale non vole se non il solo bene et gaudio vostro.

# DEL GOVERNO Cap. XII

Per governo di detta Compagnia, si dispone che si debba elezer quattro vergini delle più sufficienti della Compagnia, quattro (almen) matrone vedove prudenti et honeste di vita, et quattro homini maturi et di probata vita. Lequali vergini siano come maestre et guidatrici nella via et vita spirituale. Le matrone sodette siano come madri, ad esser solecite circa il bene et utilità delle figliole et sorelle spirituali. Et i quattro homini siano come agenti et padri circa le oc-

rente necessitade della Compagnia, o più o mancho come se vederà bastare. Hor le quatro vergini vogliano specialmente haver questo per sua impresa, ciò è de visitar ogni quindeci giorni tutte le altre sorelle vergini che sono per la città, per confortarle et aggiutarle, se le fosseno in qualche discordia o in alcun'altra tribulatione, sì di corpo come di mente; o ver che gli superiori suoi di casa gli facessen qualche ingiuria, o le volessen impedirle da qualche sorte di bene, o indurle a qualche pericolo di male. Et se lor stesse non potessen provedergli, lo referiscano alle matrone. Et se manche lor potran riparargli, se voglie convocare anche gli quatro homini, accioché tutti insiema concorrano a dar rimedio.

Se l'accadesse che alcuna di esse sorelle, per esser orphana, non potesse haver il suo, o ver, essendo massara, o donzella, o ad altro modo, non potesse haver la sua mercede, o ver accadesse altra cosa simile, onde bisognasse andar per palazzo et per via di ragione, o ver metter daccordo (il che è il meglio che far se possia), all'hora essi quatro homini per carità, a modo di padri, vogliano pigliar questa impresa, et soccorrere secondo il bisogno che sarà.

Se qualch'una delle persone del governo manchasse o per morte, o per esser levata dal officio, all'hora la Compagnia voglia congregarsi, et eleggerne delle altre per supplire il legittimo numero. Ancora, sel vene fusse che non potesse fare il suo officio, o se diportasse male, quella persona sia dal governo rimove-

Se per voluntà et dispensation di Dio avenesse che in commune se havessen qualche dinari, o altra robba, se arricorda che se gli debba haver bon governo, et prudentemente se habbian a dispensare, specialmente in soventione delle sorelle et secondo ogni occorrente bisogno. correnti necessità della Compagnia. In oltre vogliamo che le sodette quattro vergini specialmente habbiano questa impresa, cioè: di visitare, ogni quindeci giorni (o più, o men come si vedrà bastare), tutte le altre sorelle vergini, che sono per la città, per confortarle et aiutarle se esse fussero in qualche discordia o tribulatione, così corporale, come mentale; overo che li superiori suoi di casa gli facessero qualche ingiuria, o impedirle da qualche sorte di bene, o indurle a qualche pericolo di male; in modo che, se lor stesse non potesse provedergli, esse lo referiscano alle sodette matrone. Et se nanche esse li potranno riparargli, esse si vogliano convocare insieme con i quattro homini, accioché tutti insieme concorreno a dargli rimedio.

Secondo: se accadesse che alcuna di esse sorelle (per essere orfana) non potesse haver il suo, o che, essendo fantescha, o donzella, o ad altro modo, non potesse haver la sua mercede, o che gli accadesse altra cosa simile, onde bisognasse litigar, o mettere de accordo (il che è il megioe che far si possa), allhora essi quattro homini (per carità a guisa di padri) vogliano pigliar questa impresa, et soccorerla secondo il bisogno.

Terzo: se alcuna delle persone del governo manchasse, o per morte, o per esser levata dal officio, allhora la Compagnia voglia congregarsi, et eleger altre persone per supplire il legittimo numero. Et anche se vene fusse che non potesse far il suo officio, o si deportasse male, quella persona sia dal governo remossa.

Quarto: se per voluntà et dispensatione divina venesse che in comune se havesse qualche dinari, o altra robba, se ricorda che se gli debba haver bon governo, et prudentemente si habbian a dispensare specialmente in soventione delle sorelle, et secondo ogni occorente bisogno. Sel fosseno due almancho sorelle rimaste sole, senza padre et matre, et altri superiori, all'hora per carità gli sia tolta una casa a fitto (se elle non haveranno), et siano sovenute ne gli lor bisogni. Ma sel ne sarà rimasta se non una sola, all'hora qualch'una delle altre la voglia ricever in casa sua, et gli sia porzesta la soventione che parerà a chi governarano. Ma perho, se ella volesse andar a star per massara, o donzella, essi che governano habbian cura di questo, accioché la sia collocata dove bene et honestamente star possia.

Sel ne fussen de così vecchie, che per si stesse non potesseno sostentarsi, queste vogliano di gratia esser sovenute et governate, sì come vere spose di Giesù

Christo.

Finalmente s'arricorda, se alcuna delle sorelle sarà inferma, che la sia visitata, et sovenuta, et governata, de dì et di notte, s'el sarà la necessitade. Et se la fusse per morire, voglie lassare qualche cosetta alla Compagnia, in segno d'amore et charitade.

Quando qualch'una sarà morta, all'hora tutte le altre la voglian compagnare alla sepoltura, andando a due a due, con carità et con una candela in mano per una. Et che saperà leggere, dica l'Officio da morti; et chi non saprà lezzere, dica trentatre Pater Noster et tante Ave Maria, acciò che, se quella anima fusse per qualche peccato nelle pene del purgatorio, il nostro dolce et benigno sposo Giesù Christo la cave da quelle pene, et la conduca alla gloria celeste con le altre vergini, incoronata di quella aurea et chiarissima virginal corona.

Quinto: se fusse almen due delle sorelle rimaste sole, senza padre et madre, et altri superiori, allhora per carità gli sia tolta una casa a fitto (se pur esse non havranno) et siano sovenute nelli loro bisogni. Ma, rimanendone se non una sola, allhora qualchuna delle altre la voglia recevere in casa, et gli sia data la soventione, che parerà a che governaranno. Ma però, se ella volesse andare a servir altrui per fantescha, o donzella, esse che governano ne habbiano cura, accioché la sia accordata con persone, dove possino stare bene et honestamente.

Sesto: se ne fussero de così vecchie, lequali per sé non potessero sostentarsi, queste vogliano per amor di Dio essere sovenute et governate, sì come vere spo-

se di Giesù.

Settimo: si ricorda che, se alcuna delle sorelle sarà infirma, che la sia visitata, sovenuta, et governata, de dì et notte, quanto sarà bisogno, et secondo la necessità. Et se fusse per morire, essa voglia lassare qualche cosa alla Compagnia in segno di amore et carità verso le sorelle.

Ultimamente: quando alcuna sarà morta, allhora tutte le altre la vogliano compagnare alla sepoltura, andando a due a due, con carità et con una candela in mano per una. Et che saprà leggere, dica lo Officio de morti; et chi non saprà leggere, dica trentatrei Pater noster, et tante Ave Maria, accioché, se quella anima fusse andata per qualche peccato nelle pene del purgatorio, il nostro dolce et benigno sposo Giesù Christo voglia dignarsi di cavarla, et condurla alla gloria celeste con le altre vergini, incoronata di quella aurea et trionfale corona verginale.

Il fine

# 4. Ricordi

Città del Vaticano, Archivio Segreto Vaticano, S.C. Rituum, Processus 341, ff. 946v-953r.

### [Arricordi che vanno alli Colonelli]

Suor Angela, indegna serva di Iesu Christo, alle sue dilette figlie et sorelle, li colonelli della Compagnia di santa Orsola. La fortezza et il ver conforto del Spirito Santo sia in tutte voi, accioché possiate sostegnire et esequire virilmente et fidelmente la impresa che haveti sopra de voi, et insiema aspettare la gran remuneratione che Dio ve ha apparecchiata, se ve [947] sforzareti, ognuna dal canto suo, a esser fidele et sollecite cerca le sue spose che vi sono state commesse da custodirle, et star sopra la lor guardia, a fozza di vigilantissime pastore et bone ministre. Imperoché quanto haveti da pregar Dio, che'l ve illumine, et ve drizze, et insegne quello che haveti a fare per amor suo cerca tal cura; della quale un altra più degna esser non po che esser custode delle spose del Altissimo.

Siché ancor haveti da pensare a che fozza le havete da appreciare: perché, quanto più le appreciarete, tanto più le amareti; quanto più le amareti, tanto più cura et guardia havereti sopra di lor. Et impossibel cosa sarà, che dì et notte non le habbiate al petto, et scolpide nel core tutte di una in una, perché il ver amore così fa et opera. Né ve dee rincresser tal impresa; anzi, haveti da ringratiar Dio grandissimamente, che'l se sia degnato di fare che siate di quelle che lui vole che se affatigen a governare et risguardare simil suo thesoro. Gratia certamente grande et ventura ine-

stimabile, se la voreti cognossere.

Non ve perdeti d'animo di non sapere, né poter far quello che se ricercha degnamente a così singular governo. Habiate speranza et ferma fede in Dio, che egli ve agiutarà in ogni cosa. Pregatilo, humiliative sotto la gran possanza sua, perché senza dubio, sicome il vi ha dato tal impresa, così il ve darà ancor le forze da poterla eseguire, purché non manche da voi. Fate, movetive, credeti, sforzative, sperate, gridate allui co'l cor vostro, che senza dubio vedereti cose mirabile, drizzando tutto a

laude et gloria di sua Maestade et [947°] utilitade delle anime.

Et fra le altre cose, le quale, mediante la gratia di Iddio, haveti a fare, vi prego tutte, anzi ve supplico, per amor della passione di Iesu Christo et della Madonna, che vi sforzati di metter in opera questi puochi arricordi, che adesso vi lasso da essequire doppo la morte mia, li quali vi saranno una memoria almancho d'una parte del voler et desiderio mio. Et in questo cognoscerò se havereti appiazzere di farmi cosa grata. Perché sappiate che adesso son più viva di quello che era quando era in questa vita, et più vedo et ho a caro et grate le bone cose, che di continuo vi vedo a fare, et adesso più voglio et posso aiutarve et farvi del bene in ogni cunto.

### PRIMO ARRICORDO

Principalmente adonca, le mie figlie et sorelle nel Sangue di Iesu Christo carissime, io ve arricordo che vi sforzate, con l'aiuto di Dio, de pigliar et piantar in voi questo bon concetto et humil sentimento: che non vi reputate degne di esser superiore et colonelli. Anzi, tegnitive sicome ministre et serve, considerando che voi più haveti de bisogno de servirle, che lor non hanno di esser servite da voi o governate, et che Dio ben gli potrebbe provedergli per altri mezzi megliori ancor che non seti

voi. Ma per la sua misericordia ha volesto adoperare voi per suoi mezzi per meglior bene vostro: accioché possiate me[948<sup>r</sup>]ritar più apresso di sua infinita bontade, et che lui habbi causa de remunerarve.

Imparate dal Signor nostro, il qual, mentre che il fo in questo mondo, il fo sicome servo, obedendo al Padre eterno fin alla morte. Et per questo egli dice: «Ego fui in vobis non tamquam qui recumbit, sed ut qui ministrat»; ciò è: io son sta fra voi, non sicome quello che è servito, ma sicome quello che serve. Et san Gregorio, benché il fusse Papa, tutta via il se chiamava servo di servi di Iddio. Così il fava l'officio del superiore et del papato, che però nel cor suo se reputava menore delli altri, et servo delli servi de Dio, essendo arricordevole di quel detto evangelico: «Qui maior est inter vos. fiat sicut minor».

Similmente ancor voi così siate superiore, che però ve cognosciate et reputati menore de lor. Perché, così fazzendo, poi Dio esso ve essaltarà tanto, quanto voi ve sareti sbassate. Imperoché non indarno, nanche senza causa, il cor d'un vero et prudente servo de Dio se humilia, et annichila in se stesso il proprio sentimento et la delettatione della propria reputatione: perché il spera et aspetta da Dio altra delettatione, et più vera gloria et honore. Imperoché il crede fermamente quel che dice l'Evangelio: «Qui se humiliat, exaltabitur»; ciò è: chi se sbassa, sarà inalzato.

#### SECONDO PRECETTO

Siate piazzevole et homane alle vostre figlioline. Et sforzative siché solamente ve moviate per il solo amor de Dio et per il solo zelo delle anime, quando le ammonireti et consigliareti, o le essortareti a qualche bene et le rimovereti da qualche [948<sup>v</sup>] male. Imperoché più fareti con le charezze et piazzevolezze, che con acerbitade et aspre riprensione; le quale solamente alle necessitadi se deno riservare; et poi allhora a loco et tempo, et secondo che saranno le persone. Ma la carità, la qual drizza ogni cosa a honor de Dio et utilitade delle anime, ella ben insegna tal discretione, et move il core a esser a logo et tempo hor piazzevole, hor aspre, et poco et assai sicome bisogna.

Se vedereti una pusillanime et timida, et inchinata alla desperatione, confortatila, fatigli animo, prometetigli del bene della misericordia de Dio, slargatigli il core con ogni consolatione. Et, allincontro, se vedereti qualche altra prosontuosa, et che sequita la conscientia larga, et che puocho teme, a quella fatigli timore; arricordatigli del rigore della giusticia di Dio, et quanto il peccato è cosa sottile, et come siemo nel mezzo delli lazzi, et come sempre se ha causa di star in timore, come dice la Scrittura: «Beatus qui semper est pavidus»; ciò è: beato è quello che sempre sta in

paura.

#### TERTIO PRECETTO

State subdite alle madre principali, le quale io lasso in pede mio, sicome è cosa giusta. Et ciò che fati, fatilo sicome obedendo alloro, et non sicome seguitando il senso vostro. Imperoché obedendo alloro, obedireti a mi stessa; obedendo a mi, obedireti a Iesu Christo. Il qual per sua bontà immensa mi ha eletta di esser madre, et viva et morta, di così nobel compagnia, benché dal canto mio ne fusse indignissima; et, havendomi eletta, me ha ancor [949<sup>r</sup>] data gratia di poterle governare secondo la voluntà sua. Hor, se l'accadesse che havesti qualche causa giusta di contradirgli o riprenderle, fatilo con destrezza et riverentia. Et se le non vorano consertirvi,

portate patientia.

Et sapiate che l'è cosa giusta amar le madre, se le son bone, et, se le son stranie, supportarle, Et vardative per niente di lamentarvi, né mormorare o dir cosa alcuna di lor in male, né con altri, et mancho con le figliole vostre. Ma dapertutto servati l'honore et riverentia alle madre vostre, considerando che, se Dio commanda che se debba honorare li padri et madre carnali, tanto più le spirituale se deno apprezzare. Siché fati che sempre le siano in precio et riverentia, specialmente appresso alle vostre figlioline. Et pensati che, se le saran bone, che non le meritate, et se le saran cative, che ne meritaresti ancor de peggiore. Pur, se havereti qualche cosa nel core che vi dispi[a]ccia in lor, bene et senza scropolo lo potreti conferire in secreto con qualche persona bona et fidele per molti rispetti et cause. Ma però sappiate che lì, dove chiaramente cognossereti che vada il pericolo della salute et honestade delle figliole, non dovereti per niente consentire, né supportare et haver rispetto alcuno. Pur sempre tutto con bon consiglio et maturità di sentimento.

#### **QUARTO ARRICORDO**

Sareti sollicite et vigilante a cognosser et intender del deportarse delle vostre figliole, et savere delli suoi bisogni spirituali et temporali. Et così, al meglio che sia possibele, provedetigli voi, se podeti. Perché dovereti dar mancho fastidio et impazzo alle [949°] matrone, che sia possibile. Ma se non potreti provedergli voi, ricorreti dalle madre principale, et promptamente, et senza rispetto alcuno gli proponereti li bisogni delle vostre peccorelle. Et se le vedereti tarde a provedergli, usatigli instantia; et qui da parte mia ancora siate importune et fastidiose. Imperoché, se mai per causa et negligentia vostra qualcuna perisse, Dio ve ne domandarebbe stretta rasone al dì del giudicio. Perché haveti da saper questo, et tenitelo per certo: che mai nol mancharà da provedergli alle sue necessitade, così corporale, come spirituale, purché nol manche dal canto vostro. Perché se Dio ha piantada sta Compagnia, mai nol l'abbandonarà, percioché dice la Scrittura: «Nunquam vidi iustum derelictum, nec semen eius querens panem»; ciò è: mai ho visto il giusto esser abbandonato, né la sua progenie andar mendico.

#### **QUINTO ARRICORDO**

Vogliate spesso (sicome havereti il tempo et la commoditade), specialmente nelli giorni de feste, andar a visitare le vostre figlie et sorelle care, et salutarle; veder come le stanno, confortarle; animarle a star constante nella vita conminciata; invitarle a desiderar le allegrezze et beni celesti, bramar quelle feste allegre et nove del Cielo, quelli beati et eterni triomphi. Et hormai totalmente lassar l'amor di questo miserabil et traditor mondo, dove mai non è riposo, né contento ver alcuno, ma solamente sono o vani insogni, o aspri tra [950<sup>r</sup>]vaglii, et ogni cosa infelice et meschina.

Arricordatigli che per le case se diporteno bene, con bon intelletto, con prudentia et modestia; siano costumate et sobrie in ogni cosa. Mangino, beveno non per delettatione et satiar l'appetito, ma solamente per il bisogno del sostentar la natura per meglio servir a Dio. Sien sobrie ancor nel dormire, dormendo solamente quanto ricchiede la necessitade; similmente nel ridere sian accostumate et sobrie. Nell'oldire, non delettandose d'aldire se non cose honeste, et licite, et necessarie. Nel

parlare, siché le sue parole tutte sian savie et costumate; non aspre, non crude, ma humane et induttive a concordia et carità. Ditigli che, voglia dove le se ritrovan, le dian bon essempio, Et che le siano bon odor a tutti de virtude, Et che le sian obediente et soggiette alli suoi superiori. Et cercheno di metter pace et concordia dove le saranno. Sopra tutto sian humile et piazzevole. Et tutti li deportamenti suoi, gli fatti et i detti sian con caritade, et ogni cosa rezzano con patientia, con le quale due

vertude specialmente se fracassa la testa al diavolo.

Et quando le visitareti, io vi do sta impresa de salutarle, et tocchargli la mano ancor da mia parte. Et diretigli che le voglian esser unite et concordevole insiema, tutte essendo d'un voler, stando sotto alla obedientia della regola: che questo importa il tutto. Che le faccian honore a Iesu Christo, al qual le han promesso la sua virginitade et se stesse. Che le mettan la speranza et amor suo in solo Iddio, et non in persona vivente. Confortatile, animatile, che le stian di buona voglia. Et diretigli questa buona [950°] nova, che io gli annuncio da parte di Iesu Christo et della Madonna: quanto le hanno da gi[u]bilare et far festa, perché in Cielo a tutte, a una per una, è apparecchiata una nova corona di gloria et d'allegrezza, purché le stieno ferme et salde nel proposito suo. Et se sforzeno di observare la regola. Et di questo non voglian dubitare per niente.

Benché alle fiade le haveran qualche tribulatione o affanno, tutta via presto il passarà, et se voltarà in allegrezza et gaudio. Et poi il patir di questo mondo è un niente, a rispetto a quelli beni che sono in Paradiso. Ancor tengan questo per certissimo, che mai non le saranno abbandonate nelle sue necessitadi. Dio gli provederà mirabilmente. Non se perden de speranza. Quanti signori, regine et altre persone grande sono che, in quante ricchezze et possanze che li habbiano, non potranno haver un ver refrigerio in qualche suo estremo bisogno. Et tutta via lor poverine ritro-

varanno consolatione et ristoro.

Ancor diretigli che adesso son più viva che non era quando le me vedevan corporalmente, et che adesso più le vedo et le cognosco. Et più le posso et voglio agiutare. Et che son continuamente fra loro col Amator mio, anzi nostro et commun di tutte, purché le credano, né se perdan di animo et de speranza. Così voi slargatigli la geda [— grembo] di promesse, che non mancharan di fatti, specialmente a quelle che vedereti sconsolate, dubie et pusillanime. Ditigli che le me voglian desiderar di vedere non in terra, ma in Cielo, dove [951<sup>r</sup>] è l'amor nostro. In su alzen le sue speranze, et non sopra la terra. Habbien Iesu Christo per il suo sol tesoro, perché li sarà ancor l'amore: il qual se ha cercare non qui in questo mondo, ma su nel alto Cielo alla destra del Padre, come dice l'Apostolo: «Si consurrexistis cum Christo, quae sursum sunt querite, quae sursum sunt sapite, et non quae super terram».

#### SESTO PRECETTO

Voi viveti et deportative così che le vostre figlioline se spechien in voi. Et quello che voleti che lor faccian, fatil voi prima. A che fozza potreti voi riprenderle o admonirle di qualche errore, se'l sarà ancora in voi? Overo avisarle et indurle a vertù alcuna, la quale voi prima non havereti? o al mancho voi, insiema con lor, allhora non inconminciareti a operare? Siché fati che, a vostro essempio ancora, le se movano et se inanimen al viver virtuoso. Et vogliative conformare con lor in ogni atto di honestade et vertude a voi conveniente et possibile, specialmente nelle portadure, nel frequentare la Confessione et Communione, et altre simile opere. Perché l'è co-

sa iusta et conveniente che le madre sian essempio et specchio alle figliole, specialmente nella honestade, et nelle portadure, et altri costumi et atti di fuora via.

### SETTIMO ARRICORDO

Sappiate che haveti da difender et risguardare le vostre pecorelle dalli lupi et dalli ladri, ciò è da due sorte di persone pestifere, dalli inganni della gente mondana o falsi religiosi et dalli heretici. Primamente adoncha, quanto pertiene alla conversa[951°]tione mondana, specialmente risguardatile dal pigliar domestegezza con giovani et altri homini ancora, quantunche i fussen spirituali: perché la troppa domestighezza spirituale de homini quasi sempre se volta in famigliaritade carnale. Non le lassati pratichar, quanto poteti, né anche con donne ociose et alle quale dispiaccia il viver castamente, et le quale volentiera se dilettan d'aldire delle cose vane et appiazzeri mondani. State su la guardia che qualche confessore, o altro religioso, non le levassen giù da qualche suo bono sentimento, o dal digiunare, o dal proposito fermo della verginitade, o dall'apprezzar questa santa regola divinamente ordinata, o altre simile bone cose. Perché molti, sotto specie di bon consiglio, soleno rimover la mente di molte poverelle da qualche so bon senso et proponimento.

Hor, sopra il vardarle dalle pestifere openione delli heretici, quando aldireti qualche predicatore, o altra persona, haver fama di heresia, o predicar cose nove oltra la usanza commune della Chiesia, et contra quello che haveti havuto da noi, allhora con bel modo teneti via da aldir simile persona le vostre figlioline. Perché accade spesso che se piantan nella mente certe cative semenze, le quale poi a pena se pono despiantare. Siché ancor voi non habiati domesteghezza con loro. Lassatili nel grado suo. Tegnite ognun per bono, ma siate prudente al bene vostro. Perché me-

glio è sequitar quel che è certo senza pericolo, che l'incerto con pericolo.

Teneti l'antiqua strata et usanza della Giesa, ordenata, et fermata da tanti [952<sup>r</sup>] Santi per la inspiratione dello Spirito Santo. Et fati vita nova. Delle altre openioni, che adesso sorgono, et sorgeranno, lassatile andare sicome a voi non pertiengano. Ma pregati, et fati pregare, che Dio non abbandone la sua Giesia, ma la voglia riformare sicome allui piace, et vede esser meglio a noi, et più honor et gloria sua. Imperoché a questi tempi pericolosi et pestiferi altro riccorso non trovareti, che il fuger alli piedi di Iesu Christo, perché se lui ve governarà et amaestrarà, sareti amaestrate, sicome dice ancor il Propheta: «Beatus, quem tu erudieris, Domine»; ciò è: beato è quello che tu, Signore, harai amaestrato. Siché humiliateve sotto la sua man potente, et sareti illuminate, gridando co'l Propheta: «Illumina oculos meos, ne unquam obdormiam in morte».

### OTTAVO ARRICORDO

Amati le vostre figlioline egualmente, né vogliate menar parte più all'una che all'altra, perché tutte sono creature di Dio. Et non sapeti che cosa il voglia far di loro.
Perché a che modo sapeti voi, che quelle che a voi parerano più da pocho et più vile, non le siano per deventar le più generose et più accette alla sua Maestade? Et
poi, chi po giudicare gli cori et gli pensieri secreti di dentro della creatura? Siché,
abbrazzatile et supportatile tutte equalmente, che a voi non sta giudicar le ancille di
Iddio; il qual egli ben sa che cosa il ne vol fare; [952°] il qual (come dice la Scrittura)
de sassi po far deventar figlioli celesti. Voi pur fati l'officio vestro, corregendole con

amore et caritade se le vedereti caschar in qualche errore per qualche fragilitade humana, et così non cessareti di podar questa vite che vi è commessa. Et poi lassati far a Dio, il qual farà cose mirabile al tempo suo, et quando allui piazzerà.

#### ULTIMO ARRICORDO

L'ultima voce mia, che vi fazzo, et con la quale fina co'l sangue vi prego, è che siate concordevole, unite insiema tutte d'un core et d'un voler. Siate legate col legamo della carità l'una et l'altra, apprezzandove, aiutandove, supportandove in Iesu Christo. Imperoché, se vi sforzareti di esser così, senza dubio il Signor Dio sarà in mezzo di voi. Havereti in vostro favor la Madonna, li Apostoli, tutti li Santi et Sante, li Angeli, et finalmente tutto il Cielo, et tutta la machina mondiale. Perché Dio così ha ordenato ab eterno: che quelli che in bene per honor suo sono concordevoli, habbiano ogni prosperitade, et ciò che fano vada in bene, perché hano esso Dio et

ogni sua creatura in suo favore.

Mirate adoncha quanto importa sta unione et concordia. Siché desideratila, cercatila, abbrazzatila, tegnitela con tutte le vostre forze; che ve dico che, stando voi tutte così unite di core insiema, sareti come una fortissima roccha, o torre inespugnabile, contra tutte le adversitade, et persecutione, et [953<sup>r</sup>] inganni diabolici. Et ancor vi certifico che ogni gratia, che domandareti a Dio, la vi sarà concessa infallibilmente. Et io sempre sarò in mezzo di voi, agiutando l'orationi vostre. Siché animatile a far animosamente sta impresa commenza. Et insiema rallegrative, che senza dubio quel che ve dico, il sarà così. Oltra la grandissima, et inappreciabil gratia che l'Amator mio, anzi nostro, vi darà al ponto estremo della morte: perché alli bisogni grandi se cognosse la vera amicicia. Et credeti certo, che allhora specialmente mi cognossereti esservi fidele amica. Hor vi lasso; state consolate, et habbiate viva fede et speranza. Ma prima voglio che siate benedette, in nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti. Amen.

# 5. Testamento o Legati

Citta del Vaticano, Archivio Segreto Vaticano, S.C. Rituum, Processus 341, ff. 953r-958v.

[Testamento della Madre Suor Angela lassato alle Matrone]

Suor Angela, serva indegna di Iesu Christo, alla contessa Madonna Lucrecia, madre principale della Compagnia di Sant'Orsola; et alle altre governatrici et madre le nobili matrone, Madonna Genepra di Luciagi, Madonna Maria di Avogadri, Madonna Veronica di Bucci, Madonna Orsolina di Ga[953<sup>v</sup>]vardi, Madonna Giovanna di Monti, Madonna Isabetta da Prato, Madonna Lionella di Pedeciocchi, Madonna Caterina di Mei. La eterna benedittione sia sopra di tutte voi, concessa dall'omnipotente Dio nel nome del Padre del Figlio et del Spirito Santo. Amen.

Volendo Dio, le mie cordialissime nel Sangue di Iesu Christo sorelle et madre honorande, col eterno suo consiglio elezzere fuor della vanitade del mondo molte, specialmente vergine, ciò è questa nostra Compagnia, et essendogli piacciuto per la sua infinita bontade adoperare a tale et tanta sua opra mi per mezzo suo, quantunque dal canto mio fosse insufficientissima et inutilissima serva, mi ha ancor, secondo la solita bontà sua, dato et concesso tal gratia et duono che le potesse secondo la voluntade sua governare, et provedergli alle loro necessitade et bisogni, specialmente quelli, che pertieneno a drizzarle et mantenerle nella vita alla quale le sono state elette.

Et fra le buone et necessarie provisione, che Dio ha operato in me, voi ne seti una delle principalissime; le quale seti ritrovate degne di esser vere et cordial matre de così nobil famiglia, a voi nelle mani commessa per havergli quella cura et custodia che haveresti, se le fussen uscite fuor del stesso corpo vostro, et mazzor ancora. Hor qui un puoco vorrei che desedasti l'occhio dell'intelletto a considerare la gran gratia et ventura [954<sup>r</sup>] vostra, che Dio se sia degnato di farve madre di tante vergine, et le stesse spose sue nelle proprie man vostre habbia commesso et datte alla fede del governo vostro. O quanto qui haveti da ringratiarlo, et insiema da pregarlo, che sicome il se è degnato di farve presidente a così nobil gregge, così il se degni ancora de darvi tal sapere et potere, che possiate far opera degna di laude nel conspetto suo, et metter ogni studio et forza in far il vostro debito. Onde vi bisogna fare una integra et stabile deliberatione de sottomettervi totalmente alla sua voluntade, et con una viva et salda fede dallui ricevere ciò che haveti a operar per amor suo. Et in questo (accada quel che voglia) constantemente fin 'al fine perseverare. Ma sopra tutto, tutte ve prego et supplico, per la Passione et Sangue di Iesu Christo sparso per amor nostro, che vogliate metter in opera con ogni sollecitudine questi puochi arricordi: li quali, mediante la gratia de Dio, qui sotto vedeti esser posti de un in uno. Imperoché io adesso, partendome di questa vita et lassando voi in pe mio et sicome herede mie, questi avisi vi saranno sicome legati, li quali nella mia suprema voluntade ve lasso da eseguire fidelmente.

### [LEGATO 1°]

Principalmente adonca, cordialissime madre et sorelle mie in Iesu Christo, sforzative col aiuto di Dio che pigliare et havere in voi tal concetto et sentimento buono, che solamente siate mos[954] se a così fatta cura et governo per il solo amor de Dio et per il solo zelo della salute delle anime. Imperoché tutte le opere et governi vostri, essendo così radicati in questa duplice caritade, non potranno fare se non buoni et salutiferi frutti. Perché (sicome dice il Salvador nostro) «Bona arbor non potest malos fructus facere». Il buon arbor, dice, ciò è il core et spirito informato di caritade, non po fare se non buone et sante opere. Onde ancor diceva Sant'Agostino: «Ama, et fac quod vis»; ciò è: habbi amore et caritade, et poi fa ciò che ti piace, come sel dicesse chiaramente: la carità non po peccare.

#### LEGATO 2°

Da poi ve supplico che vogliate tegnir conto, et haver in mente et nel core scolpide tutte le vostre figliuole de una in una, non solamente li loro nomi, ma ancora la conditione, et natura, et ogni stato et esser suo. Il che non vi sarà cosa difficile, se le abbrazzareti con viva carità. Perché se vede nelle madre carnale, le quale, se le havesseno mille figlii et figlie, tutti le li haveriano nel animo suo totalmente fissi de uno in uno, perché così opera il ver amore. Anzi, pare che, quanto più se n'ha, tanto

più l'amore et cura cresca a un per uno. Maggiormente le madre spirituale pono et denno far questo: percioché l'amor spirituale è molto più potente senza comparatione che'l corporale. Siché, le mie cordialissime madre, se amareti queste nostre figlioline con viva et sviscerata carita[955]de, impossibile cosa sarà che non le habbiate tutte particularmente depinte nella memoria et animi vostri.

#### LEGATO 3°

Tertio: pregovi di gratia, vogliate sforzarve de tirarle con amore, et la man soave et dolce, et non imperiosamente, né con asprezza, ma in tutto vogliate esser piazzevole. Attendeti a Iesu Christo, che dice: «Discite a me, quia mitis sum, et humilis corde»; imparate da mi, dice, che io son piazzevole et mansueto di core. Et de Dio se legge: «Disponit omnia suaviter», ciò è: l'ordena et governa tutte le cose soavemente. Et ancor Iesu Christo dice: «Jugum meum suave, et onus meum leve»; ciò è: il giugo et la servitude mia è leggiera et soave. Così ancor voi ve doveti sforzar di fare, et usare ogni piazzevolezza possibile. Et sopra tutto vardative di non voler far fare per forza: imperoché Dio ha datto il libero arbitrio a ogn uno, et nessuno vol sforzare, ma solamente dimostra, invita et consiglia; sicome ancora il fa per bocca di San Zoan, dicendo: «Suadeo tibi emere coronam immarcescibilem»; ciò è: io ti consiglio a comprar la corona che non pò marcire. Io te consiglio, dice, et non: Io te sforzo. Non dico, però, che alle volte non se debba usare qualche riprensione et asprezza, a logo et tempo, secondo l'importantia, conditione et bisogno delle persone; ma solamente se dovemo movere per la caritade et solo zelo delle anime.

### [955<sup>v</sup>] LEGATO 4°

Quarto: dovete esser bramose et accese a metter ogni studio et cura in far che le vostre figlioline siano adornate d'ogni vertù et d'ogni real et bel costume, quanto più possiano piazzere a Iesu Christo, Sposo suo. Et specialmente doveti essere sollicite, et curiose che le se serveno integre et caste, et che in ogni atto et gesto suo se deporteno con honestade et prudentia, et tutto facieno con patientia et caritade. Che se si veden le madre temporale poner tanta cura et sforzo in acconzare, in adornare et polire a tante varie fozze le sue carnal figliole, accioché le possian piazzere alli suoi sposi temporali; li quali, quanto più sono grandi et signorili, tanto più lor se sforzano di fargele con ogni diligentia più et più venir in gratia, specialmente in quello che lor comprendono essergli più grato. Et lì ogni suo contento hano et metteno, che le sian matre de figliole, che tanto piacciano a sposi così gentili; imperoché così ancor lor sperano, per causa et mezzo delle lor figlie, haver l'amor et gratia del genero. Quanto più voi questo far dovete cerca queste celeste figliole vostre? le quale sono Spose non de mondani, et corrottibili, et finalmente puzzolenti sposi, ma del immortal Figliol del eterno Dio? O que nova bellezza et dignitade esser governatrice et madre delle Spose del Re di re, et Signore delli signori et quodammodo suocere devenir del Figlio di Iddio; et così per mezzo delle figliole aquis[956<sup>r</sup>]tar la gratia et amore del Altissimo. Pur troppo felice, se pronte et accorte sareti a cognossere tal vostra nova et unica ventura.

#### LEGATO 5°

Quinto: sareti avisate, quando havereti consigliato et avisato di buon core tre, o al più quatro fiade, qualche una di qualche error notabile, et vedereti che la non vorà obedire, allora lassatila nel grado suo et più non gli mandate li colonelli, né altre visitatrice; specialmente, perché po accadere che la meschinella, vedendose così abbandonata et scomiata, venga a moverse a compontione, et a più bramare di voler stare et perseverare in essa Compagnia. Imperoché Dio ancor scomiete Adam fuor del paradiso accioché, così meglio recognoscendose, havesse a far penitentia. Onde se tale ritornar vorà, essendo mal contenta del suo fallo, la se dee ricever; con questo patto, però, che la domande perdonanza a tutte voi, et ancora al suo colonello. Et in penitentia se gli die da digiunare un venerdì in pane et aqua.

### LEGATO 6°

Sesto: sareti provide quando vedereti che una durarà tanta fatiga in voler demetter le foggiette, o simile altre frascharie, che altramente puocho importano, di quella non habbiate troppo buon concetto che la debba perseverare in essa regola. Perché se non vol far quello che è meno, peggio farà quello che è più. Ma però [956<sup>v</sup>] qui se dee esser prudente, imperoché il po accadere che una persona in una bagatella haverà il mazzor cargo dell'appetito suo; siché, vinta in quella parte, più non gli sarà troppo difficel alcuna altra.

#### LEGATO 7°

Settimo: fati che due, o almancho una fiada il mese, ve habbiate tutte con li colonelli a congregare, et così insiema consultare et far un buon essamine sopra tal governo. Et specialmente sopra quello che li colonelli ve riferiranno delli deportamenti delle vostre figlioline, et delle lor necessitade et bisogni così spirituali, come corporali; et provedere a ogni cosa, secondo che'l Spirito Santo ve inspirarà.

#### LEGATO 8°

Ottavo: dovereti haver cura di far congregar alle fiade le vostre figlioline lì dove a voi parerà esser meglio et più commodo. Et così (secondo che havereti la commoditade di qualche persona che sia al proposito) fargli fare qualche sermonzello et essortatione: accioché ancora così insiema ve se habbian a vedere sicome care sorelle, et così spiritualmente insiema ragionando, congratularse, et insiema consolarse, il che non sarà puoco lor giovamento.

#### LEGATO 9°

Nono: sapereti che, se nol fusse utile et conveniente cosa che questa Compagnia havesse qualche intrata, Dio non harebbe incominciato a provedergli in questo. Però avisovi: siate qui prudente, et siate buone et vere madre, et quella intrata che havereti, dispen[957] satila in bene et augmento de essa Compagnia, secondoche la discretione et amor materno vi dettarà. Qui non voglio che cercate consiglii di fuora via; fate voi solamente fra voi, secondo che la carità et Spirito Santo ve illuminarà et dittarà, drizzando tutto al bene et al profitto spirituale delle figlioline vostre, sì

per incitar et mover quelle che ge sono a mazzor amor et obligatione di far bene, come per tirarne ancora delle altre. Perché questo è il ver fine et accetto a Dio di far elemosina, et usar cortesia, che per questo se rimova la creatura dal male et dal vitio, et se induca al bene et alli boni costumi, over almancho a mazzor profetto spirituale. Imperoché così quasi ad una certa fozza se comprano et se obligano le persone, et se sforzano a far quello che se vole. Perché sicome quando (verbi gratia) una giovane piglia et accetta qualche presente et dono da qualche persona estranea mondana, la rimane obligata a compiacergli nel voler suo, né pare che la gli possia più dir de no, così, né più né meno, con li presenti et elemosine se tirano, et quodammodo se sforzano le persone al far bene; et così quasi legate rimaneno al far bene. Servati così fatte vie, che non potreti fallare.

### LEGATO 10°

Decimo: pregovi con tutto il core, vogliate esser sollicite et vigilantissime a fozza di tante curiose pastorelle sopra questo celes[957<sup>v</sup>]te grege a voi nelle mani dato, che qualche zizania de discordia o altro scandalo fra lor non accadesse, et specialmente che non le se macchiassino di qualche velenata et heretica openione in questi tempi pestiferi. Et considerate che'l demonio mai non dorme, ma a mille fozze cerca la ruina nostra. Però stati sulla guardia, et specialmente habbiate cura che le siano unite et concorde di volere, sicome se legge delli apostoli, et altri christiani della primitiva Giesa: «Erat autem eorum cor unum»; cioè: un sol cor era de tutti loro. Così voi ancora sforzative di essere con tutte le figlioline vostre, perché quanto più sareti unite, tanto più Iesu Christo sarà in mezzo de voi a fozza de padre et buon pastore. Né altro signale sarà che se sia in gratia del Signore, che l'amarse et esser unite insiema: perché egli il dice: «In hoc cognoscet mundus quod eritis mei discipuli, si diligeretis invicem»; ciò è: per questo conoserà il mondo, che sareti di mei, se ve amarete insiema. Ecco che l'amarse et il concordarse insiema è segno certo che se camina per la via bona et a Dio grata. Siché, le mie sorelle et madre, state qui vigilante, perché il demonio qui specialmente ve aguaiterà sotto specie di bene. Onde, se ve accorgereti di qualche pur ombra de così fatta peste, subito rimediatigli secondo che Dio ve illuminarà. Et per niente [958<sup>r</sup>] non lassati crescere simil semenza nella Compagnia; perché il sarebbe anche un morbo di cattivo essempio alla cittade, et oltra ancora. Imperoché lì dove è diversitade di voluntade. lì sempre convien che sia discordia; lì dove è discordia, lì senza dubio è roina, sicome dice il Salvadore: «Omne regnum in seipsum divisum desolabitur»; ciò è: ogni governo fra sé discorde andarà in roina.

#### LEGATO ULTIMO

Ultimatamente habiate cura grandissima che li boni ordeni dati, specialmente quelli nella Regola, se habbiano a servare diligentissimamente. Et se, secondo li tempi et bisogni, accadesse de ordenare di nuovo, o fare altramente qualche cosa, fatilo prudentamente et con buon consiglio. Et sempre il principal ridotto vostro sia il riccorrere alli piedi di Iesu Christo; et lì tutte, con tutte le vostre figliole, far caldissime oratione. Perché così senza dubio Iesu Christo sarà in mezzo di voi, et ve illuminarà et amaestrarà sicome vero et bon Maestro, di quello che havereti a fare. Teneti questo per certo: che questa regola di diritto è piantada per la santa man sua, né mai ab-

bandonarà questa Compagnia finché'l mondo durarà. Perché se egli principalmente l'ha piantada, chi sarà che la potrà dispiantare? Credetilo, non dubitate, habiate ferma fede, che'l sarà così. Io so quello che dico. Beati quelli che veramente se ne im-

pazzaranno.

Queste, et altre simile cose fidelmente se fareti, sicome secondo li tempi et le importantie ve dittarà il Spirito Santo, reallegrative, [958] state di buona voglia. Ecco la rimuneratione vostra grande sarà apparecchiata. Et dove saranno le figliole, lì ancor saranno le madre. State consolate, non dubitate, in mezzo di noi veder ve voremo in Cielo, che così poi il commune Amator nostro vorà. Et chi è che allui resister possia? la cui luce et splendor allegro di verità nel ponto della morte ve circondarà, et ve liberarà dalle man del nemigo. Siché fidelmente et con allegrezza perseverate nella opera comminciata. Et guardati, guardati, dico, che non ve affredesti, che ogni promessa che vi fazzo, a colmo di mesura vi sarà atesa. Hor me ne vado, et voi infra questo mezzo fati delle fazzende. Ma prima ve abbrazzo, et a tutte io do il baso della pace, supplicando Dio che'l ve benedica. In nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti.

Amen. Δοξα θεω.

# 6. Atto d'elezione di Angela Merici

Città del Vaticano, Archivio Segreto Vaticano, S.C. Rituum, Processus 341, ff. 921v-924v.

In Christi nomine. Amen. Anno ab eius Nativitate millesimo quingentesimo trigesimo septimo, Indictione decima, die decimo octavo mensis Marcii, in coquina domus habitationis infrascripte domine Sur Angele quondam domini Ioannis de Mericis, tertii ordinis dominorum Fratrum Sancti Francisci de Observantia, site in contrata Sancte Afre et iuris Sancte Afre Brixie; presentibus Iovitta filio Cipryani de Rezate tixtore panni lini, Ioanne q. Martini de Bovegno portatore, Cipryano filio Ioanini de Concagninis beretario, et magistro Io. Petro Fontana caligario, omnibus habitatoribus Brixie in con[922<sup>r</sup>]trata Sancte Afre, testibus rogatis, vocatis et notis.

Cum sit quod de anno proxime preterito introducta fuerit instituta et formata una divina et saluberrima Societas seu Confraternitas in civitate Brixie sub titulo Sancte Ursule, divino inspirante lumine, que dicitur Virginum per Venerandam dominam Sur Angelam tertii ordinis dominorum Fratrum Sancti Francisci de Observantia, filiam q. etc. Joannis de Mericis, olim civis et habitatoris Brixie, eaque postmodum fuerit approbata laudata et confirmata per R. in Christo patrem D. Laurentium Mucium, juris utriusque doctorem, in Episcopatu Brixiensi vicarium et locumtenentem generalem R.mi D. D. Episcopi Brixie sub die octavo mensis Augusti anni 1536, et subscripta per D. Bernardinum Boarnum notarium civem Brixie, et que confirmatio ibi visa et lecta fuit;

et cum sit quod in Regula et Capitulis dicte Confratrie dictarum Virginum adsit capitulum undecimum, in folio 22, de regimine dictarum Virginum, in quo ordinatum fuit quod elligi debeant quatuor Virgines de magis sufficientibus dicte Societatis, et quatuor Matrone vidue prudentes et honeste vite, et quatuor Homines maturi, et vite approbate, que Virgines sint uti magistre et guidatrices dictarum Virginum in vita spirituali, et dicte Vidue tamquam matres et sollicite ad bonum et utilitatem

dictarum Virginum sororum et filiarum spiritualium, et dicti quatuor Homines sint tanquam agentes et patres spirituales circa occurrentias et necessitates dicte Societatis, et cum aliis modis et regulis et ordinibus, prout in dicto capitulo fit mentio, et

ad quod pro contentis in eo habeatur relatio;

et quia in dicto capitulo pretermissum fuit quod elligi [922<sup>v</sup>] deberet una magistra generalis seu thesauraria seu priorissa dicte Societatis, que gubernare deberet elimosinas et legata factas et facta, fiendas et fienda dicte Confratrie seu Societati, et quod exigere possit dictas elimosinas et legata a quibuscumque personis debitricibus dicte Confratrie, et de exactis liberare et componere, necnon exigere livella legata dicte Confratrie per q. nobilem virum D. Hieronymum q. D. Augustini de Patengolis, olim civem Brixie, de quibus in eius testamento rogato per D. Calimerium Bagnagattum notarium, ad quod pro contentis in eo habeatur relatio;

propterea antedicta D. Sur Angela auctrix dicte Societatis existens in loco antedicto, prius facta invocatione Sancti Spiritus, convocari fecit infrascriptas virgines in dicta Societate descriptas, ad dictum locum, que capitulariter coadunate, intellecta continentia dicti capituli, volentes quantum in se est exequi continentiam dicti capituli, et providere indemnitati et conservationi dicte Societatis, et ad bonum com-

mune tam presentium quam futurorum,

prius facta oratione et invocatione Sanctissime Trinitatis, datis vocibus per eas, servatis in similibus que servari solent, representantes, ut asseruerunt, tres partes quinque partium dictarum virginum dicte Societatis, et agentes per se et earum sorores virgines absentes, et pro quibus de rato promiserunt, omni meliori modo, iure, via, forma et causa, quibus melius possunt et debent,

eligerunt primo in earum matrem ministram et thesaurariam prefatam D. Sur Angelam, et viva voce, et nemine discrepante, que intelligatur et sit perpetua toto tempore eius vite, et ea mortua quod una elligi debeat virgo per dictam Societatem, et

in eius locum, que sit de [923<sup>r</sup>] magis approbatis, et etatis mature,

et successive eligerunt quatuor virgines de dicta Societate, quarum nomina sunt videlicet: Barbara de Monteclaro, Margarita de Brixia, Agnes ancilla D. Ursule de Gavardo, et Clara que habitat in domo ser Pauli de Angulo, civis et habitatoris Brixie.

In matronas vero elligerunt et elligunt infrascriptas quinque, quarum ultima vocetur supranumeraria, videlicet Magnificam D. Comitissam D. Lucretiam relictam q. Mag.ci D. Hectoris de Lodrono, et D. Zenebriam relictam q. Spectabilis D. Alexandri de Luzago, D. Ursulam uxorem q. D. Hieronymi de Gavardo, D. Mariam uxorem q. D. Antonii de Advocatis, et D. Lucretiam uxorem q. D. Pauli de Luzago, ita quod quicquid factum et ordinatum et dispositum fuerit per eas, quod id valeat et valere debeat perinde ac si factum fuisset per omnes virgines dicte Societatis, promittentes semper de rato habendo sub earum obligatione reali et personali. Hoc addito, quod si alique earum decederent, quod in locum defoncte seu defonctarum elligi debeant una seu plures per dictam Societatem, seu maiorem partem earum, et prout supra, prius tamen facta invocatione Sancti Spiritus, et implorato auxilio divini Numinis, et similiter fiat et observetur, si alique predictarum electarum cassarentur ab earum officio legitima causa per dictam Societatem seu maiorem partem ipsius, iuxta continentiam et ordinem datum per dictum capitulum.

Circa vero provisionem dictorum quatuor Hominum maturorum nundum facta

fuit electio per dictam Societatem, quia nundum fuit provisum de eis.

Et presentem electionem, syndicatum et ordinem sic ut supra institutos dicte

Virgines sic fecerunt et faciunt ad communem utilitatem, et com[923<sup>v</sup>]mune beneficium dicte Societatis Sancte Ursule, ac etiam ad ornamentum ipsius; et ut res et negotia dicte Societatis bene recte et consulte regulentur, et promiserunt de attendere etc., obligantes se personaliter etc. constituentes etc. et generaliter etc.

In qua quidem electione, seu syndicatu seu convocatione, intervenerunt infra-

scripte virgines, videlicet:

Primo D. Sur Angela antedicta; Lucretia filia magistri Gasparini Mayacule, Dominica filia magistri Iacobi de Plattis furnarii, Marta neptis Antonii de Pezis, Margarita filia Betini Rive, Caterina filia magistri Iacobi de Sancta Euphemia, Antonia de Gargnano riperie Sallodii, Marta ancilla D. Antonie del Mangan, Caterina filia magistri Andree del Mangan, Dominica filia Antonii Gosii, Caterina eius soror, Ursula filia magistri Philippi Maringoni, Lactantia eius soror, Cecilia filia Albertini de Albricis aurificis, Flora filia Mafei de Collibus, Marta filia magistri Christofori Polani, D. Caterina soror R.di D.ni Bernardini Grossi, Caterina filia magistri Ioannis de Gattis, Dominica filia magistri Francisci de Gattis, Margarita filia magistri Hieronymi aurificis, Iulia filia magistri Vincentii de Chazalochis, Dominica filia Io. Antonii Veronensis, Caterina filia magistri Antonii barberii, Marta eius soror, Caterina filia magistri Baptiste de Panadellis, Caterina filia magistri Bertolini de Travayado guaynarii, Maria magistri Francisci de Navis, Francisca filia magistri Francisci Merzadri, Nunciata filia Francisci Boni, Maria filia magistri Francisci Pedroche, Ioanna de riperia Gargnani, Marta filia magistri Pecini de Travayado confectoris, Marta filia Io. Petri de Pilottis [924<sup>r</sup>] de Savallo, Ursula filia magistri Defendi de cararia Maringoni, Camilla filia domini Francisci Tirandi, Andriana filia magistri Natalis confectoris, Lucia filia magistri Marci de Dardellis de Crema, Nocenta filia magistri Ioanini de Pezis, Chaterina filia Io. Francisci de Monticellis, Marta eius soror, Lucretia filia magistri Baptiste aurificis, Aurelia filia Albertini de Albricis, Maria filia magistri Bertolini de Leno, Beatrix filia Comini de Adro, Margarita filia Cresimbeni de Sibaldis de Bovegno, Maria q. Ioanini de Sibaldis, Blancha filia magistri Francisci de Buulco aurificis, Petra filia magistri Pauli de Vallibus, Caterina filia Nocenti de Marochis, Victoria filia magistri Antonii beretarii, Iacobina filia magistri Mathei de Tabernolis, Honoria filia magistri Marcolini de Castiono caligarii, D. Maria filia q. ser Danielis Fruschate, Marta filia magistri Petri de Gabiano, Derusiana filia magistri Marci Antonii Cinalie confectoris, Caterina filia magistri Marcolini de Castiono, Caterina filia magistri Francisci Tayardelli, Laura filia Angeli de Cayno furnarii, Iulia filia ser Gabriellis de Giussano aurificis, et agentes etiam nomine Marie et Graciose sororum filie q. D. Baptiste de Spalenzis aromatarii, et Isabette de Lonado, Isabette q. Beltrami Fachere de Martinengo, Margarite ancille D. Thome de Gavardo, Nunciate et Medee habitatricum in domo D. Monache de Malazistis, Simone et Marie ancillarum D. Marie de Advocatis, Caterine et Ursule ancillarum D. Ioannis de Chizolis, Flore ancille D. Hieronymi de Patengolis, et Angele ancille D. Lucretie de Luzago.

Et de predictis omnibus sicut supra ordinatis et publicatis rogatus [924<sup>v</sup>] sum ego Io. Hieronymus q. D. Thadei de Montibus notarius civis Brixie publicum confi-

cere instrumentum ad laudem Dei et sapientis viri.

Loco + signi. Ego Io. Hieronymus q. D. Thadei de Montibus notarius, civis et habitator Brixie suprascriptis omnibus presens fui, et rogatus ut supra, et quia aliis occupatus, per alium transcribi feci. Ideo in premissorum fidem me subscripsi, signo mei tabellionatus apposito ad maius robur premissorum.

## 7. Memoria della morte

Brescia, Biblioteca Queriniana, Pandolfo Nassino, Registro di molte cose seguite, ms. C.I.15, pp. 574-575.

De Sur Anzola di Merichi

Adì 27 Zenaro 1540 morse fo filiola del q. Thomaso di Merichi de Desenzano terra Bressana, de età de anni circa 65 in 70, donna magra de corpo et de comune statura, vestita de beritino; fo adì 28 soprascritto portata in S.ta Afra, seu in S.to Faustino et S.to Jovita ad sanguinem, a hori 16 del dì 28 soprascritto, et visto per mi Pandolfo f. q. domino Jacomo f. q. ditto domino Jacomo del q. d.no Pandolfo mio avo, cum tanta solemnità et giente che se fusse sta uno signore. La causa, questa Madre Sur Anzola a tutti predicava la fede del sumo Dio che tutti se inamorava de lei. Questa Sur Anzola molto amava lo soprascritto mastro Zoan Jacomo Bardinello per seguitar le boni operi de Dio, et anche lui molto la comendava. Questa donna non manzava se non la dominicha de maitina a disnar, et poi così stava fina a la zobia de maytina a disnar, a quello chel ditto mastro Zoan Jacomo Bardinello diseva, et anchor de altri lo intese. Et fo lassata così in ditta giesia de S.ta Afra per alquanti di che mai non se putrefece cosa alcuna de sua persona, et fo poi messa in ditta giesia in uno sepulcro over deposito cum grandissimo honore, qual sepulcro [575] overo deposito <sup>1</sup>

# 8. Registrazione della supplica di Angela Merici

Città del Vaticano, Archivio Segreto Vaticano, Diversa Sacrae Penitentiariae Clementis P.P. VII. Anno IX. 1532, reg. n. 79. Inedito.

Indultum pro moniali

IIII nonis Novembris

Banchus taxa (turonenses) XIII 1/2 Brixien.

Exponitur Sanctitati Vestre pro parte oratricis Angele de Salodio mulieris Brixien. diocesis sororis tertii ordinis Sancti Francisci quod ipsa ob devotionem suam erga Ecclesiam Sanctorum Faustini et Iovite alias Sancte Aphre Brixien. ordinis Sancti Augustini Congregationis Lateranensis gerit, cupit cum se ab hac luce migrare contigerit corpus suum in dicta aut quavis alia Ecclesia prout forsan tunc sua devotio expostulaverit, sepeliri facere posse quod propter statuta dicti tercii ordinis cuius soror existit seu privilegia ipsi ordini concessa sibi permitti non sperat absque Sedis licentia speciali apostolice; Quare supplicatur etc. quatenus si ut sepulturam suam sibi in dicta Ecclesia quam duxerit eligendam sine tamen iuris alieni preiudicio vivens eligere et in illa corpus suum cum ab humanis decesserit sepeliri mandare libere etc. valeat indulgere placeat ac licentiam et liberam concedere facultatem, non obstantibus constitutionibus etc. apostolicis dictique tercii ordinis statutis etc. etiam iuramento etc. roboratis privilegiis quoque indultis et litteris apostolicis ei-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Il testo è rimasto incompiuto.

dem ordini illiusque superioribus et personis ac locis sub quibusvis verborum formis et clausulis etiam in forma brevis etc. contra premissa forsan concessis etc. Quibus omnibus tenores huiusmodi etc. expressis habentes illis alias etc. hac vice etc. derogare, ceterisque etc. dignemini de gratia speciali.

Fiat de speciali. L. Regens.

# 9. Lettera del Penitenziere Maggiore

GIROLAMO LOMBARDI, Vita della Beata Angela Merici, Fondatrice della Compagnia di S. Orsola, Venezia 1778, p. 132, nota f. Emendata.

Antonius miseratione divina tituli Sanctorum Quatuor Coronatorum Presbyter Cardinalis dilectae in Christo Angelae de Salodio mulieri Brixiensi Sorori Tertii Ordinis S. Francisci salutem in Domino. Ex parte tua nobis oblata petitio continebat quod tu ob devotionem tuam, quam erga Ecclesiam Sanctorum Faustini et Jovitae alias S. Aphrae Brixiensis Ordinis S. Augustini Congregationis Lateranensis geris, cupis, cum te ab hac luce migrare contigerit, Corpus tuum in dicta, aut quavis alia Ecclesia, prout forsan tunc devotio tua expostulaverit, sepeliri facere posse, quod propter Statuta dicti Tertii Ordinis, cuius Soror existis, seu Privilegia ipsi Ordini concessa tibi permitti non speras absque Sedis Apostolicae licentia speciali. Quare supplicari fecisti humiliter super his per Sedem eamdem de opportuno remedio nunc provideri. Nos igitur, tuis in hac parte supplicationibus inclinati, Auctoritate Domini Papae, cuius Poenitentiariae curam gerimus, et de eius speciali mandato super hoc vivae vocis oraculo nobis facto, Tibi, ut sepulturam tuam tibi in dicta Ss. Faustini et Jovitae, alias S. Aphrae, aut quavis alia Ecclesia, quam duxeris eligendam, sine tamen juris alieni praejudicio vivens eligere, et in illa Corpus tuum cum ab humanis decesseris, sepeliri mandare libere et licite possis et valeas, tenore praesentium indulgemus, ac licentiam, et liberam concedimus facultatem; Non obstantibus Constitutionibus, et Ordinationibus Apostolicis, dictique Tertii Ordinis Statutis, et consuetudinibus, etiam juramento, Confirmatione Apostolica, vel quavis firmitate alias roboratis, Privilegiis quoque, Indultis et litteris Apostolicis eidem Ordini, illiusque Superioribus, et personis, et locis, sub quibusvis verborum formis, et clausulis, etiam in forma Brevis contra praemissa forsan concessis, confirmatis, et innovatis quorumcumque tenoris existant. Quibus omnibus, tenores huiusmodi, ac si de verbo ad verbum insererentur, praesentibus pro sufficienter expressis habentes, illis alias in suo robore permansuris, hac vice dumtaxat specialiter, et expresse derogamus, caeterisque contrariis quibuscumque.

Datum Romae apud Sanctum Petrum sub sigillo Officii Poenitentiariae IIII No-

nas Novembris, Pontificatus Domini Clementis Papae VII, Anno nono.

Phi. Ferrinus.

# 10. Ufficio, corona, disciplina, cilicio: descrizione

Città del Vaticano, Archivio Segreto Vaticano, S.C. Rituum, Processus 340, ff. 703v-706v. Inedito.

Sono anni quarantaquattro dacché io [rev.do D. Marco Saiano], in qualità di sostituto del reverendissimo Padre generale di questa Compagnia di S. Orsola di Brescia, tengo cura e custodia delle cose che si conservano in questo privato Oratorio della Compagnia stessa; e durante questo tempo ho sempre veduto nel medesimo Oratorio custodirsi le sagre reliquie della corona, officio, cilizio e disciplina della detta Beata con particolare venerazione, come si conservano le reliquie degli altri Santi. Trovandosi dette robbe rinchiuse in una scatola di legno, la quale si tiene chiusa entro l'armario che è situato nel mezzo di questo medesimo Oratorio, e che è accomodato a foggia di altare, a cui serve di pala un'Immacolata Concezione di Maria Vergine; la qual scattola sta unita con un'altra simile, che conserva un esemplare stampato della *Regola* della sudetta Beata Angela, sottoscritto da S. Carlo di proprio pugno.

Che poi in tal maniera siansi per lo passato, e con la stessa venerazione, tenute e conservate le sudette robbe usate dalla Beata Angela in sua vita, stimate quali sagre reliquie, lo so anche dalla tradizione che era nei Superiori, e nelle persone del governo della detta Compagnia sino dal principio del sudetto mio ufficio di Sostituto. Imperoché mi ricordo che nell'anno 1716, avendo un certo signor Conte di Lodrone desiderato e supplicato di avere una qualche reliquia della [704] Beata Angela, li sudetti Superiori, e altre persone del governo le quali sogliono essere circa il numero di trenta, a pieni voti presero parte di graziare il detto signor Conte di Lodrone di una particella del cilizio della sudetta Beata Angela, e di stipularne un publico istromento. Al qual decreto della congregazione io stesso per impegno del mio ufficio intervenni, e l'ho anche scritto di mia mano sul Libro generale della detta Com-

pagnia.

Quibus auditis iniunctum fuit a reverendissimo domino Archipresbitero Cathedralis iudice, dominisque adiunctis deputatis dicto domino Marco Saiano, ut exhibeat coram Dominationibus suis capsulam ligneam, in qua introclusae custodiuntur reliquiae rerum, quae ad usum fuerunt Beatae Angelae Mericiae viventis; cui mandato ille obsequens, aperto supradicto armario, extraxit inde capsulam ligneam continentem praefatas reliquias; quam praesentavit Dominationibus suis; a quibus imperatum est mihi Notario Actuario, ut describam praefatam capsulam ligneam, ac omnes reliquias in eadem introclusas: quod ego statim feci, prout sequitur.

La scattola che contiene le sunominate reliquie di cose che servirono ad uso della Beata Angela Merici vivente, è di lunghezza palmi 1 oncie 3; di larghezza poco più di oncie 8; di altezza compreso il coperchio oncie sei 1/2. Essa è una scattola di legno sottilissimo, di forma quadrilunga con gli angoli che tondeggiano. Tutta è di fuori dipinta a colla, a fiori e linee. Ha il coperchio non attaccato, ma che vi si soprapone, e col suo cerchietto alto oncie 1 e 4/1 l'abbraccia intorno. [704<sup>v</sup>] Al di dentro è del colore naturale del legno, cioè bianco che tira al giallo. Nel mezzo del coperchio al di fuori v'è incollato un pezzo di carta con queste parole:

- Qui sono l'Officio della Madonna usato dalla Beata Madre Angela, fondatrice

della Compagnia;

- la corona che lei usava di portare,

- una sua cinta di cilicio,

la sua disciplina più rigorosa;

le scritture che autenticano le cose sopradette.

«Il carattere di questa iscrizione sembra di mano del rev.do D. Bernardino Faino, che fu molti anni sostituto del reverendissimo Padre delle Orsoline di Brescia, e ultimamente fu anche Padre delle medesime, ed ha scritta e stampata la *Vita* della predetta Beata Angela; e morì l'anno 1673».

Dentro la detta scattola si sono ritrovate le cose infrascritte:

I. Una borsa di forma quadrilunga di veluto negro damascato, di lunghezza oncie 10 circa, di larghezza circa oncie 6, e di grossezza poco più di oncie 2, logora e lacera per l'antichità; la qual si vede che contiene un libro. Essa è ornata di trine d'oro filato, cioè in tutti gli angoli e cuciture e nelle estremità superiori per dove si apre: dove anco la parte di dietro in forma di lingua viene a sopraporsi alla parte d'avanti e chiude quasi nel mezzo della faccia la borsa medesima per mezzo di un alamaretto d'oro di cordoncin filato, pendente da un fiore di ricamo d'oro, il quale è fermato da un bottoncino d'oro filato, che è attaccato ad un simil ricamo.

Il libro che si contiene in questa borsa è l'*Officio* che serviva ad uso della Beata Angela vivente, ed è di lunghezza quasi oncie 10, di larghezza circa oncie 5 1/2, e di grossezza oncie 2 in circa. È co[705<sup>r</sup>]perto di grosso cartone sopravestito di corame nel quale si vede che col ferro v'erano stati impressi alcuni ornamenti, ma adesso i

detti cartoni sono mal conci dal tempo e dal tarlo.

Il detto Officio è stampato in quel carattere che si chiama comunemente gotico, con carattere rosso-nero. Nel frontispicio, quasi nella metà della pagina, vi sono queste parole:

Officio ordinato, cum soi psalmi per cadauno officio, sì per el primo officio, come per quello dello
advento, et per quello della
purificatione; et similiter della
Nativi
tate

Al di sopra di questo titolo, nel vano della pagina alquanto più verso destra di chi legge, vi è scritto:

a dì 27 de Zener 1540, a hori 21 e meza ma[n]chete la Madre Sur Angiela. E questo era lo suo hoficio che lei diseva laus [D] eo in celo et in tera.

[705] Pare che prima fosse scritto *a hori* 22, e che sia stato poi corretto *a hori* 21. A fianchi delle tre ultime linee della detta iscrizione manoscritta, cioè a sinistra

di chi legge, si vedono alcuni frammenti di parole, donde per esser la carta corrosa dal tarlo, non si rileva se non:

> ..... in die ..... narti ..... di

Sotto poi il titolo sudetto stampato, vi si legge scritto

Oficio de la veneranda Madre Sur Angiela, de la sua morte in qua egli è mio, Zan Piero Fontana abuto de sua promisione.

Esso consta di carte stampate n. 177, e una bianca nel fine. Le prime 12 non hanno i numeri segnati. Esse contengono il calendario e cose appartenenti al calendario; qualche orazione ed un metodo per l'esame della coscienza tutto in latino. Dove poi principia l'offizio della Beata Vergine, incominciano anco i numeri fatti alla romana, segnati da una parte sola, e sieguono sino al numero CLXVI. Ma è da avvertire che il detto libro nel fine è mutilo, e deve credersi che vi manchi qualche carta. In oltre vi manca di pianta la carta che doveva esser segnata XXXVIII. Manca ancora più della metà inferiore delle carte XIII e XVII, e alcuni pezzi di altre, consumati dall'uso.

[706] L'anno ed il luogo della stampa, che probabilmente dovette essere notato nel fine, non si sa, perché, come ho detto, il fine vi manca. Tuttavolta si può credere stampato intorno l'anno 1510, perché nella seconda carta tergo vi è una figura del circolo 19le, ed a fianchi vi si legge: Scias quod anno a Nativitate Domini millesimo quingentesimo nono eramus in prima domo post Crucem, et habeamus (forsi habebamus) 9 pro aureo numero. Deinde discurres per annos Domini de Domo in Domum, et invenies aureum numerum illius anni.

II. Dentro della detta scatola vi è pure un'altra borsa, o per meglio dire l'interior fodera d'una borsa ch'era di raso nero; del qual raso si sono conservati appena alcuni logori pezzetti malamente attaccati alla fodera; ed alcuni frammenti si vedono sparsi sul fondo della mentovata scattola che è coperto di bianca carta. La borsa, cioè la detta fodera (che è anco in più d'un luogo scuccita) è di tela, o sia renzo nero lustro con colla, ed è lunga oncie 8 e larga 10, e si chiude e s'apre per mezzo d'un cordoncino di seta di color pavonazzo infilzato nelle pieghe della medesima.

Nella detta borsa vi sono la corona e la disciplina usate dalla Beata Angela.

La corona consta di cinque poste, ma una di esse poste, in vece di dieci, ha undici Ave Maria. I Pater Noster che dividono le poste, e sono al numero di sei, sono grossi sino quasi al diametro di un'oncia. Le Ave Maria sono di diametro la metà, essendo gli uni e le altre di rotonda figura, benché non perfetta. Essa è infilzata da una cordicella di filo bianco, le cui due estremità si uniscono in un globo di diametro di un oncia 1/4 circa, lavorato a coste di melone, dopo del quale pendono due altri globetti della grossezza dei Pater Noster.

Delle Ave Maria ve ne sono alcune più piccole delle altre. La materia è di ambra nera, ma in una posta ve ne sono solamente tre di simili alle altre, e le sette rima-

nenti sono di osso di color berettino, e sono ancora più piccole.

La disciplina è come segue. Da un anello di ferro largo oncie una 1/5 pende una

catenella di ferro lavorata in maniera che forma come tre coste, [706] grossa un quarto d'oncia, lunga un palmo ed oncie 5 in circa, compreso un anelletto che ha nel fine; il qual anelletto tiene infilzati tre altri anellini più piccoli. Due di questi anellini hanno attaccati per ciascuno tre rami di catenella di ferro simile alla sudetta, ma di ferro più sottile, tutti all'incirca della stessa lunghezza, cioè d'oncie 9 1/2, e ogn'una di tali catenelle, o sia rami della disciplina, ha infilzate due stellette di otto punte di diametro quasi mezz'oncia, infilzate di poi, una a mezzo e l'altra nel fine; le quali stellette sono di metallo. Il terzo poi dei detti tre anellini ha attaccati solamente due rami, ed uno di essi è simile agl'altri descritti. Ma l'altra catenella, se si eccetui il principio per due dita a traverso, tutta è lavorata a punte di ferro lunghe circa 5/2 d'oncia, le quali punte sono in tutto numero 32.

III. Vi è, finalmente, nella detta scattola un rotolo di carta grossa, sopra di cui sono scritte, di carattere che rassomiglia quello del reverendo D. Benardino Faino, queste parole: Cilicio usato dalla Beata Madre Sur Angela, e in esso rotolo si è ritrovata una fascia di color nero, fatta di crine di cavallo e lavorata in maniera che è assai grossa, e dura, e pungente. Questa è larga oncie 8, ed è lunga palmi 1 e oncie 10 1/2 in circa. Ma da questa misura in un angolo ve ne manca un pezzetto di oncie 2 1/2 in circa in quadrato. E, sparsi per la carta che lo contiene, si vedono fila e frammenti del medesimo cilicio, staccatisi nella occasione di reciderne dei ritagli, che si sa sono stati in più volte donati per reliquie ai divoti.

Le scritture che autenticano le sudette reliquie sono state in questi ultimi anni levate fuori dalla sudetta scattola, per metterle in ordine nel registro dell'Archivio che

ultimamente è stato fatto.

# 11. Ufficio, corona, disciplina, cilicio: donazione

Città del Vaticano, Archivio Segreto Vaticano, S.C. Rituum, Processus 340, ff. 656r-658v. Inedito.

Tenor Instrumenti donationis Corollae precariae, et libri nuncupati Officio, quae ad usum fuerant viventis Beatae Angelae Mericiae, sub die 11 Octobris 1662, hic est, videlicet:

11 Octobris 1662. Donationi della Corona, et dell'Officio della Beata Sor Angela Merici fatte alla Veneranda Compagnia delle Vergini di S. Orsola.

In Christi nomine. Amen. L'anno di nostra salute mille seicento sessantadue, l'Inditione decimaquinta, il giorno di mercordì undeci del mese di Ottobre, nell'Oratorio privato della Veneranda Compagnia delle vergini di S. Orsola di Brescia contiguo alla Chiesa di essa Santa. Presenti li M. reverendi signori Don Bernardino Faino Sostituto, et Don Giovanni Battista Spinone Confessore di essa Compagnia, et il signor Carlo Castellani figliolo del signore Francesco, tutti habitanti in Brescia testimoni pregati, et asserenti, et con me nodaro infrascritto.

Essendo non poco accrescimento della gloria del signor Iddio il revelare et conservare con la conveniente pietà et devotione le cose de suoi servi, et de santa memoria: quindi è che, mossa da simil zelo, madonna Lavora Personelli, figlia del quondam D. Agostino, citadina et habitante in Brescia, et Vergine della veneranda Compa[656<sup>v</sup>]gnia di S. Orsola, di età d'anni sissanta due, et sempre vissuta nel santo timor di Dio, doppo ricevuti in essa chiesa di S. Orsola li SS.mi Sacramenti di Confessione, et Comunione, è venuta nel predetto Oratorio, et si è constituita alla presenza della M. Ill.ma et veneranda signora Lucretia Grata, Madre generale della detta Compagnia, et di me nodaro infrascritto, et testimoni sopradetti, havendo in mano una Corona negra infilzata di materia d'ambra, et di poste cinque, una de quali si trova essere di materia diversa, per haver datto le Ave Marie, che simili all'altri vi si trovavano, a diverse persone che li havevano richieste per loro divotione. La qual, affermando in rei veritate, et sopra la sua conscienza, stando la bona cognitione che ne tiene, esser quella stessa vera corona della quale si serviva come sua propria la beata Sor Angela di Merici, fondatrice della medesima Compagnia, lasciata per sua memoria al tempo della sua felice morte, seguita l'anno mille cinquecento quaranta, ad una Vergine di S. Orsola sua compagna familiare, et da lei vestita dell'habito di orsolina per nome Assensa. La qual, per esser vissuta sopra cent'anni, vi sono pur anco delle persone che attestano di haverla benissimo conosciuta, et che questa nel fine di sua vita diede in dono la stessa corona ad una signora Lucia di Personelli della stessa sua famiglia, et avia paterna della predetta madonna Laura, comettendogli strettamente che la tenesse in riverenza et devotione, per essere la vera corona della beata Madre Sor Angela Merici, fondatrice della Com[657<sup>r</sup>]pagnia di S. Orsola, et da lei usata longamente. Et questa essendo sempre stata tenuta et conservata nella sua famiglia Personella con tal stima et riverenza, finalmente è poi pervenuta già molti anni nelle mani di essa madonna Lavora, tenendola nel medesimo concetto, et usandola con divottione come cosa della stessa Beata Madre Angela. Ma perché la sua casa finisse in lei et in madonna Catherina sua sorella, et dubitando che poscia questa corona tanto pretiosa non perigolasse, overo non fosse tenuta col dovuto honore, si è perciò risoluta donarla alla medesima Compagnia di S. Orsola, sperando di fargli cosa grata, accioché sia tenuta in quella stima, conservatione, et honore che si conviene. Onde che essa madonna Laura, porgendo riverentemente la detta corona alla sopradetta veneranda signora Lucretia Grada Madre generale, rappresentante degnamente la Compagnia stessa, levandosi ella in piedi, quella ha ricevuto per memoriale della detta Beata Madre Angela, baciandola con divotione, et riponendola dentro una borsa di raso negro, l'ha consignata al sopradetto molto reverendo signor Don Bernardino Faino, sostituto della Compagnia, da riponere nell'archivio di essa, nel qual anco si conserva dentro una borsa di veludo negro l'Officio della gloriosa Vergine Maria, che pure la sudetta Beata Madre Suor Angela fu solita di recitare, et tenere appresso di sé. Il quale, essendo rimasto doppo di lei in mano del q. D. Piero Fontana, come nella memoria scritta nella prima facciata di esso, di poi in mano della signora Genevra Luzzaga di degna [657<sup>v</sup>] memoria, una delle otto Matrone, che lei constituì Governatrici della Compagnia nella sua Institutione, nella quale ella gli fu gran coadiutrice; et essendo, poscia, successivamente pervenuto nella mani della signora Veronica, parimente Luzzaga, Vergine della stessa Compagnia, di raro esempio, nepote della santa memoria del signor Alesandro Luzzago, Protettore della Compagnia, ella poi nelli anni passati il donò alla Compagnia sudetta, perché fosse conservato et tenuto col decoro che si conviene. Il che tutto sia a gloria del Signor Iddio, a honore della predetta Beata Madre Sor Angela, et a consolatione delle sue dilette figliuole spirituali, le Vergini et Matrone governatrici della medesima Compagnia, presenti et future.

Ego Ioannes, filius quondam domini Dominici de Calcinis, civis et habitator Brixiae, publicus Veneta auctoritate Notarius de praedictis praesens, et rogatus fui fideliter transcriptis, in fidemque praemissorum me cum solito meo signo apposito subscripsi.

Tenor quoque Instrumenti donationis Flagelli et Cilicii, quae ad usum fuerant Beatae Angelae Mericiae, dum in vivis ageret sub die 11 Junii 1663, est qui sequitur:

#### Donatio unius Disciplinae et Cilicii

11 Junii 1663. In Christi nomine. Amen. Anno a Nativitate Domini millesimo sexcentesimo sexagesimo tertio, Indictione prima, die vero undecima mensis Junii, in Oratorio ubi fit congregatio Gubernatorum et Gubernatricum Virginum sanctae Ursulae civitatis Brixiae, praesentibus M. Ill. et reverendis domino Ludovico [658<sup>7</sup>] Rosa Superiori generali eiusdem Societatis, et M. rev.do D. Bernardino Faino substituto in eadem testibus etc.

Constituito alla presenza di me Nodaro infrascritto come persona publica et legitima, et delli predetti testimoni il M. Ill.mo et Rev.mo signor D. Pavolo Pizzoni canonico, curato della chiesa insigne collegiata de Santi Nazaro et Celso di questa città di Brescia. Havendo nelle mani una disciplina, sive flagello, formata di cadenelle di ferro anticha et ruginosa, con otto brancoli pendenti con diversi stimoli acuti et pungienti, et con una fascia di silicio formata di come di cavallo rigorosa, di color come negra, longa circa un brazzo, et alta, sive larga, un palmo, affermando in rei veritate et sopra il petto proprio sacerdotale, haver le dette cose havute dalle mani proprie dell'Ill.mo et Rev.mo Mons. Marco Morosini di recolenda memoria, vescovo di Brescia; il quale anc[h]'esso disse di haverle havute in dono dalla bona memoria della M. R.da Madre Donna Prasside Ceruti, monecha professa nel monasterio di S.ta Maria di Pace di questa Città, come disciplina et cilitio che realmente havesse usato di servirsene la S.ta memoria della Madre Sor Angela Merici, fondatrice della veneranda Compagnia delle Vergini di Brescia sotto l'invocatione di S. Orsola et Compagne Vergini et Martiri; et che fossero tenuti come per reliquie nel detto suo monastero; la qual disciplina et cilicio, stimandole esso signor canonico Pizzoni esser degne di conservarsi con decoro et honorevolezza, et [658<sup>v</sup>] dubitando egli che doppo la sua morte non periscano; perciò, parendogli che dovessero star molto meglio con più decoro et sicurezza in mano della detta Compagnia, come cose pietose et instromenti di penitenza della stessa sua Madre fondatrice, quindi è che, vedendo me Nodaro infrascritto et testimoni soprascritti, quella stessa disciplina et cilicio ha datto, consignato et donato in perpetuo dono irrevocabile alla predetta Compagnia, ricevendola in nome di essa la M. Ill. et veneranda signora Lucretia Grata Madre generale di essa. La quale le stesse cose attualmente ha consignato al sudetto M. R.do signor D. Bernardino Faino, Sostituto, perché l'unischa con altre cose pertinenti alla medesima Beata Madre Sor Angela, che col dovuto rispetto et riguardo si conservano nella stessa Compagnia. Il che tutto sia a gloria del Signore Iddio, a degna rimembranza di essa Beata Madre, et a consolatione spirituale delle divote Vergini sue figliuole spirituali; et anco a merito particolare di esso signore Canonico, essendosi privato di cose che gli eran care, per dargli maggior honore et conservatione nella Compagnia predetta.

Ego Ioannes filius quondam D. Dominici de Calcinis, civis et habitator Brixiae, publicus Veneta Auctoritate notarius de praedictis praesens et rogatus fui, fideliter transcriptis. In fidemque praemissorum me cum solito meo signo apposito subscripsi.

«Loco signi tabellionatus»

# 12. Antico sepolcreto di sant'Angela

Città del Vaticano, Archivio Segreto Vaticano, S.C. Rituum, *Processus* 340, ff. 707v-708r. Decrizione notarile di un disegno a penna che si trovava al f. 10 del *Libro della Vita* di Giovan Battista Nazari. Inedito.

Di poi, nella carta che è la decima di quelle che sono scritte in detto Libro, vi è, fatto a penna, il disegno di un deposito da morto di figura quadrilunga. Si vedono nel basso tre menzole che lo sostengono. Vi è la base, lati e cornice superiore, tutto fatto, come dicono, a quadratura. Nel mezzo di questi ornamenti si vede il ritratto della beata Angela giacente come morta, la quale ha velo e bavero monacale, e sopra il velo è cinta di una corona di fiori, e posa la testa su due cuscini. Tutta poi è involta in un mantello, né si scuoprono se non le mani, delle quali ha sopra posta la destra [708<sup>r</sup>] alla sinistra, ed i piedi coperti da pianelle. Sopra la cornice del deposito s'alza un cimiero, il quale dolcemente va ristringendosi, e in esso stanno effigiati due angioletti in lunga e ampia veste, genuflessi con un sol ginocchio e coronati di laureola, i quali pare sostenghino un'animina in figura di un fanciullino ignudo, che stende in alto le braccia, e sembra che la presentino all'Eterno Padre, il quale in mezza figura è delineato nella sommità del detto deposito (la qual termina in semicircolo) e sembra che questi a braccia aperte l'attenda. È lungo orizontalmente il detto disegno oncie 10 1/2 in circa, ed è alto nel mezzo oncie 8 1/2 in circa, comprese le menzole.

## 13. «Rasse»1

Desenzano (Brescia), Archivio Antico Comunale, Liber Provisionum E, reg. n. 5, cm 30,5x20; f. 294r. Inedito.

Johannes Merici cum bestiis 6 porzinis dampnificavit in ciserciam heredis quondam Dominici Gedoni in contrata de Machet die 5 suprascripti [Juin 1479]; acusatus per Martinum Testorem.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> In the Italian edition the whole page of the register is reproduced in facsimile.

## 14. Dichiarazioni d'Estimo<sup>1</sup>

Desenzano (Brescia), Archivio Antico Comunale, Libro d'Estimo, reg. n. 56, cm 32x22, f. 16 v. Inedito.

Sur Merizi habet petiam terrae aratoriae vidatae in contrata Caser a monte Zorzo Monte, a sero Petrus Domigo. Lire 5.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> In the Italian edition the whole page of the register is reproduced in facsimile.

## 15. Estratto di una lettera del P. Francesco Landini

Milano, Archivio Storico Diocesano, Sez. XIII, vol. 61, Regola della Compagnia di santa Orsola..., in Milano... [Per Pacifico Ponte nel mese d'ottobre, l'anno del Signore 1569], pp. 27-32.

Estratto d'una lettera del P. Francesco [Landini] che sta nel Monte vicino a Brescia, scritta al R.P. Frate Franceschino Visdomini, adì 21 decembre 1566.

La Compagnia di Santa Orsola in Brescia contiene il numero di centotrenta vergini, senza le vedove, et par che la divina providenza habbia suscitato questa vocatione honorata per facilitar et essaltar molte verginelle, et ricche e povere, le quali, benché riverischano la santa religione, nondimeno non si sentono inclinate a serrarsi con tanta angustia ne claustri, o legarsi ne voti, overo non possono claust[r]arsi per la povertà, o non vogliono per altri buoni rispetti; nondimeno bramano seguir l'Agnello dovunque esso va, et cantare il cantico nuovo, et esser incoronate anch'esse di quella candida ghirlanda dell'aureola. La fondatione [sic] di questa santa Compagnia fu una certa Angela, et di nome et di vita, contadinella di sangue, ma di santità nobile et famosa. Nacque nel contado di Brescia sopra Salò, et mentre che nel campo l'altre sue compagne mietitore andavano a merenda, lei si slontanava all'oratione; et una volta, elevata in spirito, parvegli aprirsi il cielo et uscir una processione maravigliosa d'angeli et di verginelle, scambievolmente a duoi a duoi, gli angeli in varie sorte di stromenti sonavano, et le verginelle cantavano; et essa il tuono udì talmente, che lo sapeva cantare. Et passando oltre la processione, arrivò una vergine sua sorella, già di buona vita, la qual poco avanti era andata al paradiso; la qual, fermatasi con tutta la processione, le predisse che Dio si voleva servir di lei, et che essa haverebbe fatta una Compagnia di vergini, la qual si doveva dilatar, e simil cose. Parlo per udita da parecchie persone serve di Dio, che quasi tutte furno al suo tempo; né so dir il tutto, perché non ho ora commodità d'andare a Brescia a parlar con le donne antiche sue famigliari. Doppo questa visione se n'andò in Gierusalemme; et, divenuta cieca, fu nel ritorno miracolosamente illuminata. Et seguì anco questa maraviglia: che, non sapendo lettere, acquistò tanta intelligenza, ch'ella intendeva li nostri Dottori latini; et, entrata nella città di Brescia, fu di tanto credito appresso de Bresciani, che pareva un'altra Delbora. Fino li gran dottori et predicatori se gli inclinavano et andavano a consegliarsi seco. Fu dotata di tanta fede che, se fosse stata persa, si sarebbe ritrovata in lei. Era di vita poverissima et austerissima, et fu veduta nel tempo dell'oratione co'l corpo levata in aere. Cominciò in Brescia questa honorata Compagnia di vergini, et fin mentre essa era viva, ne congregò intorno il numero di cento, preponendo loro per madri delle grandi et honorate gentildonne di Brescia, et instituendo loro il modo di vivere con questa regola ch'io mando, approbata hora dalla Sede Apostolica et dai capi spirituali di Brescia. Et ordinò per madre di tutta la Compagnia, avanti il suo felice transito, la Signora Contessa Lucretia, et lasciò il testamento, ch'io mando, alle Venerande Matrone Governatrici, et i precetti alle Colonelle. Finalmente, havendo fatto molto frutto nella città di Brescia, et havendo in quella sparso fragrantissimo odore, se n'andò alla Celeste Patria; et, come ho letto in un libro sigillato et autenticato da i Conservatori Apostolici, è stata quasi reputata Beata dalla città di Brescia; et ho trovato questi versi sopra l'Arca del suo honorato Sepolcro:

- I. Proposito Martyr, virgo actibus, ore magistra, Sic tribus aureolis Angela dives ovas.
   Angela nuper eras morum vitaeque magistra, Nunc patriae tutrix praesidiumque veni.
- II. Angela viva fui, nunc Angela mortua dicor, Sum tamen angelicis Angela iuncta choris Vos qui me nostis, exemplo vivite nostro Sic facite ut docui, mortua adhuc doceo.
- III. Conditur hoc tumulo, cui nomen et insuper omnis
   Vita fuit superis aequiparanda choris.

   Angela divisa est tria per loca: corpus in arca,
   Spiritus in coelo, nomen in ore virum.
- IV. Angela virtutum varia redimita corona
  Hic jacet extremo restituenda die.
  Spiritus aethereas penetravit ferv[i]dus arces
  Et summo ingenuus adstitit ille Deo.
  Illa haec est virgo quae morum regula viva
  Illustrem erexit virginitate chorum
  Brixia, crede mihi, sacrum venerare sepulchrum,
  Nil non sancta Deo proxima virgo potest.

Doppo il suo benedetto transito, il demonio, per divina permissione perseguitando questa Compagnia, la volse crivellar; ma perché era piantata dal Celeste Padre, et era opera di Dio, non poté esser diradicata et dissoluta, imperoché doppo molte tribulationi è divenuta più bella, più grande et più gloriosa, massime poi che la Compagnia si elesse per capo, con l'autorità del nostro Episcopo, il Padre Messer Don Francesco che vive al presente, et hora camina più felicemente et fruttuosa-

mente, et con maggior odore et sodisfattione di tutta la Città.

Di questa sin'hora se ne sono serviti tutti li hospedali di Brescia; di questa se ne servono le scuole delle fanciulle dell'Institution Christiana; di questa se ne serve Iddio nella conversione dell'anime et a tirar molte case, dove loro habitano, al servitio di sua Divina Maestà. È cosa difficile il dar ad intendere il gran bene universale che Dio cava di questa santa Compagnia in varie sorti d'opere di pietà et misericordia; questa frequenta gli santi Sacramenti, le sante orationi et il culto santo del Signore; in questa rilucono et risplendono gl'ornamenti delle virtù sante di povertà e d'ubidienza, talmente che, ad un cenno, il Padre della Compagnia tutte le congrega dovunque esso vuole. Gran maraviglia è poi questa, non già però incredibile appresso la divina Onnipotenza et Bontà, la qual con gli influssi della sua gratia corresponde alle opere che sono sue, maraviglia, dico, di tutte le maraviglie è il veder questi tre fanciulli, anzi tenere verginelle, non ardere nella fornace di Babilonia; anzi, tante Agnese overo Agate in mezzo i lupanari et il fuoco, rimanere illibate et intatte. Io dirò solamente questa parola, a tal proposito: che il Padre qual le governa loda molto et si ritruova grandemente sodisfatto delle virtù di questo virgineo et angelico choro. Laus Deo.

### 16. Processo Nazari

Città del Vaticano, Archivio Segreto Vaticano, S.C. Rituum, Processus 341, ff. 936v-945v.

Le Justificationi della Vita della Reverenda Madre Suor Angela Terzebita.

Anno 1568, indictione undecima, die lune vigesimo primo Junii, in camera cubiculari infrascriptae magnificae dominae Isabettae sita in civitate Brixiae, in contrata Plateae de Dom, praesentibus magistro Joanne Baptista filio magistri Bertolini, et magistro Joanne Maria omnibus de Boscoldis de Ottalengo habitatoribus Brixiae,

testibus rogatis etc.

Ad instantiam magnificarum, et nobilium matronarum dominarum Biancae de Portulacis, Isabettae de Pratis, Veronicae de Buzzis, et aliarum rectricium, et gubernatricium totius regulae Sanctae Ursulae Brixiae, constituto, seu interrogato [937] domino Antonio de Romanis mercatore cive et habitatore Brixiae ad perpetuam rei memoriam de dicenda veritate super tota vita quondam et quasi beatae Matris Sur Angelae olim fundatricis dictae regulae Sanctae Ursulae. Qui sibi dato iuramento per me Notarium infrascriptum, in presentia testium suprascriptorum de dicenda

dicta veritate interrogatus dixit:

Circa dell'anno 1517, andando alcune fiate a casa di madonna Catherina moglie del quondam domino Giovanni Battista de Patengoli, vi stava in casa sua una certa Madre Suor Angela di [lacuna] da Desenzano, consacrata del Terzo Ordine di Frati Minori di Santo Francesco, per comissione de Superiori di detti Frati, per consolare ditta madonna Catherina per la morte di suoi cari figliuoli. Onde, mentre che alcune fiate andava io a revisitare la detta Madre Suor Angela, mi prese grande affettione, et si redusse ad alloggiare nelle mie case; nel qual tempo, per quello poteva io vedere et sapere, et per quanto mi diceva essa, lei faceva et teneva questa vita che io dirò.

Da principio (per quanto me disse) sino dalli cinque anni havendo udito leggere al padre libri spirituali di Santi et Vergini, cominciò a darsi ad una vita sobria spirituale et contemplativa, nella quale di tempo in tempo più ardentemente perseverando, avenne che gli morì una sua sorella. Onde doppo, desiderando di sapere se l'anima della sorella era salita ai felici beni della gloria eterna, faceva cotidiani prieghi al Signore. Onde un giorno, ritrovandosi essa in un campicello suo appresso Desenciano, et ivi con le solite orationi pregando per la so[937] rella, ecco che nel mezodì vide una schiera d'angeli in aere, nel mezo delli quali era l'anima della sua amata sorella tutta felice et trionfante; et in un subbito con velocità si sparve detta schiera d'angeli, onde vi restò nella mente la veduta anima, in modo che, sempre pensando di quella, più ardentemente sollecitavasi nei digiuni, astinentie, et orationi; et così prese l'habito del Terzo Ordine de Frati Minori di Santo Francesco.

Interrogatus dixit: «la non me disse dove fu ordinata del detto ordine; vi dico bene che, quando era in casa della sudetta madonna Catherina Patengola, haveva det-

to habito.

Interrogatus de vita ejus dixit: Mentre stete nelle case mie (che furono circa anni quatordici) dormiva sopra un storolo tenendo un pezzo di legno sotto il capo per capeziale, et non me riccordo haverla mai veduta mangiar carne; ma solamente frutti et erbaggi, bevendo solamente aqua. Et di più vi dico che ogn'anno faceva se non

un pasto dalla Assensione per fin alla Pentecoste, cioè cinque giorni doppo l'Assensione; la qual cosa faceva con frutti et aqua solamente.

Interrogatus, respondit. Io so questo; che di giorno in giorno, cressendo la sua sanctimonia, veniva la sua fama di spiritualissima vita spargendosi fra il populo; in modo che vi concoreva moltissimi della città di Brescia: chi alle sue divottissime orationi per impetrare dal Signore qualche gratia, [938<sup>r</sup>] chi per quietare qualche discordia nata fra cittadini et altri nobili della città. Fra i quali mi ricordo della discordia che era fra domino Filippo Sala, et domino Francesco Martinengo, la quale, con l'intervento del Duca d'Urbino, di Rettori, et Nobili della città mai si poté quietare et pacificare; et essa Madre Suor Angela, pregata dalle moglii delli sudetti, con pochissime parole fece talmente, che si pacificorno in modo che ne restorno sodisfatti; la sua fama si spargeva nei circonvicini luoghi, talmente che ogni Signore gli concedeva quello che dimandava. Et vi dico questo perché io so che una fiata, partendosi lei et io da Brescia, et andati a Mantoa per visitare la Madre Suor Osana, et ritornando pasassimo per Solfrino, ove si trovava il Signor Alovigio da Castione et sua Consorte, et perché esso Signor Alovigio haveva bandito un famigliare amico della Madre Suor Angela, et confiscatoli i beni; essa, andata dal Signor Alovigio, fu benignamente recevuta, et liberò quello amico dal bando, et fugli restituito i suoi beni; et così ritornò a Brescia.

Interrogatus de ejus itinere in Terra Sancta Hierusalem, dixit: Havendo per molti anni havuto in disìo d'andare a visitare quelli Santi Luoghi de Hierusaleme, ciò feci noto alla detta reverenda Madre Suor Angela; la quale sommamente mi pregò non andassi senza lei, perciò che voleva venire a visitare quelli Santi Luoghi. Accade, che l'anno 1524 (se ben m'ariccordo), havendo stabilito di fare quel viaggio, fu riportata nova in Brescia che per quell'anno non si faceva il viaggio con le nave venetiane. Onde io, partendomi da Brescia per andare alla fiera di Lanciano, passai per [938°] Venetia, ove, vedendo steso il stendardo delle navi per detto viaggio, subbito avisai la Madre Suor Angela, et essa subbito venne a Venetia insieme con un Bartolomeo Biancoso da Salò suo germano, et così il seguente giorno del Corpo del Signore, accompagnati tutti noi perigrini dal magnifico Signor Alovigio Justiniano per sina alla nave, tutti si imbarcassimo, et facessimo detto viaggio felicemente; nel qual viaggio, quando giongessimo alla Canea, la detta Madre Suor Angela perse quasi in tutto la vista.

Nel ritorno nostro si fermassimo a Rama città per otto giorni (per certi assasini che ne aspettavan per farne pregioni). Dopo venessimo in Cipri, ove stessimo molti giorni, perché la nave caricava alcune merci; doppo venissimo in Candia, ove stessimo alquanti dì, et la sera di Santo Francesco si partessimo insieme con due altre nave, et nella nostra entrò il Viceduca di Candia che veniva a Venetia; et ecco che, gionti fuori del porto, si levò aspra fortuna che durò per nove dì, et de tre navi ch'eramo, passati i trei primi giorni, se ne somersero due cariche di merci et de nobili Veneti, et una di quelle, ch'era d'appresso, era d'un nobile di casa Dolfini; et ve dico che, se subito non scaricavamo la nostra nave dal carico et peso causato dall'arteglieria, vuomini et altri merci, si sarìa somersa; pur in questo modo fussimo trapportati in Barbaria, ove, subbito partiti per non essere fatti pregioni, venessimo a Durazzo ov'era [939<sup>r</sup>] l'Armata Turchesca; et così la mattina ne sopravene una galera et due fuste, le quali furono salutate come è il solito, et il patrone della nostra nave fu menado con una fusta al Capitan dell'armata turchesca, ove, interrogato, fu licentiato, anci, ch'esso Capitano Turchesco venne a salutare il Viceduca che si tro-

vava su la nostra nave, perché l'haveva già conosciuto alla corte del gran Turco, che vi era per ambasciatore.

L'armata si partì dal porto avanti noi occultamente, per andare a certi passi per farne pregioni alla nostra partita, Ma Iddio, mediante i prieghi continovi della Madre Suor Angela, volendone salvar dalle mani di quelli cani, ecco che, partiti noi dal porto, si levò tal felicissimo et prospero vento, che si trovassimo sopra Città Nova in Schiavonia; et doppo d'indi partiti, venessimo in Venetia ove stessimo alquanti giorni; nel qual tempo la detta Madre Suor Angela, alloggiando a Santo Sepolcro con quelle monache, fu visitata da moltissimi religiosi, gentilhuomini, gentildonne et altre persone spirituali; et doppo fu levata d'ivi da alcuni nobili spirituali et messa nell'Hospitale delli Incurabili; dalli quali era spesso revisitata; et poi venerono da lei alcuni nobili delli Signori a visitarla, et per intendere et interrogarla della vita, et sua scientia et santimonia; i quali, ritrovandola, come li era stato proposto, ardente nell'amore del Signore, fu da loro pregata che volesse restare in Venetia a commune beneficio de quelli luoghi pii di quella illustrissima Città. Lei, desiderosa di ridursi alla sua diletta patria, et non volendo aspettare il sequente giorno (acciò che non.[939v] fussero ritornati forsi col Patriarcha, al quale per obedientia haverìa bisognato obedire) quella istessa sera si partessimo da Venetia, et venessimo a Brescia.

Interrogatus si postea semper stetit in Brixia, dixit: Vi dico che, doppo a un tempo, desiderosa di visitare quelle santissime reliquie che sono in Roma, si partì con duoi sacerdoti et fece quel viaggio; et, quando fu ritornata, mi disse, oltra altre molte cose di quelle divotissime reliquie, che mentre visitava quelle fu vista da un certo messer Piero della Puglia, Cameriero di Sua Santità, il quale si ritrovò anco esso nel nostro viaggio de Hierusalem, et che oltra molte gratissime parole, la condusse a basciare il piede a Sua Sanctità; et il beatissimo Padre la pregò che volesse restare in Roma in quelli luoghi pii; et Lei, con humilissime parole scusandosi, si partì, et l'istessa sera, partendosi fuora di Roma, dubitando che sua Santità non gli havesse imposto che per santa obedientia fusse restata, venne a Brescia.

Interrogatus si aliquid aliud de ea scit, respondit: Anco mi riccordo, che, doppo alquanti dì che ritornò da Roma, si trovava in Brescia il Ducca di Milano alloggiato in Santo Barnaba; il quale come persona spirituale, intendendo della santimonia et vita d'essa Madre Suor Angela, la mandò a dimandare; et essa, da lui andata, et da lui con gratissime parole recevuta et salutata, la pregò che fusse contenta d'accettarlo come figliuolo, insieme con tutto il [940<sup>r</sup>] suo stato, della qual cosa molto ringratiatolo si parti; et essendo, doppo alquanti dì, andata al Monte Varal per vesitare quel luogo, et ritornando passò per Milano, ove andò a visitare l'Eccellenza del Duca, il quale con dolcissime parole recevendola, summamente la pregò che restasse in Milano, ma prudentemente scusandosi si partì, et venne a Brescia, et d'altro non m'ariccordo.

Die, millesimo, loco, et praesentibus suprascriptis testibus et ad instantiam ut supra. Interrogato ut supra magistro Bertolino de Boscolis de Ottalengo, maringono, habitatore Brixiae de dicenda veritate ut supra, et suo juramento delato in presentia dictorum testium, testificatur, et dixit:

Il potria essere circa anni trentaquattro, se ben mi ariccordo, che la detta Madre Suor Angela stava nelle case di Santa Affra de sotto la fontana, ove qualche fiata, per esser ivi vicino, l'andava a visitare, percioché era tenuta in grande estimatione di spiritual vita; ma che vita tenesse non vi so dire, ma vi dico bene che per tutta la Città si diceva ch'essa faceva una vita sobria, spirituale, et di grande santimonia, et per quanto ho visto di lei, vi dico che un giorno di lavoro, ritrovandomi nella mia vicina chiesa di Santo Barnaba per vedere messa all'altare di Santo Nicholò da Tolentino, ove a quella messa, oltre moltissime altre, li vidi la Madre Suor Angela, la qual, se bene mi reccordo, dicendo il Frate [940<sup>v</sup>] l'Evangelio, non solamente me (ma molti di quelli ch'erano a quella messa) vidi la detta Madre Suor Angela in piedi, et levata da terra quasi un palmo, et così stete per un pezzo con gran maraviglia, et mi parse un miracolo vedere tal cosa. Et questa cosa venuta a sapere da moltissimi della Città, in tal modo veniva conosciuta la sua santimonia, et religiosissima vita, et de altro non vi so dire, né me raccordo di dirvi altro di detta Madre Suor Angela.

Millesimo supradicto, die mercurii decimo octavo Augusti, sub porticu Magnifici Equitis Jacobi Chizolae, sita in civitate Brixiae in contrata Sanctorum Petri et Marcellini, praesentibus Excellentissimo Doctore Domino Ludovico filio dicti Magnifici Equitis, et Domino Augustino Gallo testibus etc. et asserentibus etc. ad instantiam ut supra, Interrogato per me nottarium infrascriptum Magnifico Equite Domino Jacobo Chizzolla nobile Brixiensi, et ibidem habitatore de dicenda veritate ut

supra, respondendo dixit ut infra:

In quel tempo che la Reverenda Madre Suor Angela viveva, mi riccordo haver odito dire da persone degne di fede, ch'essa sin da fanciulla cominciò darsi ad una vita sobria, a degiuni, et orationi, et che più poi prese l'habito de minori del Terzo Ordine che portava, et in oltre intendeva che non mangiava mai carne, se non in tempo d'infirmità, et di più che in tutta la quadragesima non mangiava, eccetto però le dominiche d'essa, nelle quali mangiava solamente cibi vili, come de frutti et herbaggi; et in vero non si [941<sup>r</sup>] conosceva in lei effetto alcuno cattivo perché lei era aliena dall'ambittione, dalla vanigloria, dall'ira; solo si compiaceva nell'humiltà, nella vita contemplativa et religiosa, perseverando in essa vita et via del Signore con digiuni, astinentie, orationi et vigilie. Ancora mi pareva gran cosa che lei, non havendo mai imparato lettere lattine, intendesse così bene come faceva la latinità; et di più, non havendo studiato Sacra Scrittura, facesse così belissimi, dotti, et spirituali sermoni, che alle fiate duravano un'hora. Et me riccordo anco che, quando essa era all'estremo della sua vita per morire, l'andai a vesitare; ove, levata in settone, fecemi un bel essordio intorno al vivere christiano; et, al mio partire, fu pregata dal signor Thomaso Gavardo (quale ivi era venuto meco) che gli lasciasse qualche spirituale documento. Onde essa altro non disse che questo: Fate in vita quello che voresti haver fatto al tempo della morte; et haec sunt etc. et altro non mi ricordo.

Anno, millesimo suprascripto, die veneris vigesimo nono Octobris, in apotheca infrascripti magistri Pauli, iuris [lacuna] sita in civitate Brixiae apud ecclesiam cathedralem, praesentibus magistro Paulo de Ubertis et magistro Vincentio de Boiolis ferrariis, omnibus habitatoribus Brixiae testibus etc. ad instantium ut supra, delato iuramento domino Agostino Gallo civi et habitatori Brixiae de dicenda veritate de omnibus quae scit de dicta reverenda Matre Sur Angela, de quibus dixit:

[941<sup>v</sup>] Quantonque io Agostino Gallo per più anni havesi conosciuto per fama la reverenda Madre Suor Angela terzibita di Santo Francesco, et anco haver raggionato alcune volte con lei, nondimeno cominciai a conoscerla maggiormente quando la condussi da Brescia a Cremona in casa mia, appresso di Santo Vittore, essendo con lei mia sorella Hippolita vidua, del 1529 perché essendo venuto Carlo Quinto Im-

peratore a Piasenza per incoronarsi, come fece, si dubitava, ch'egli non ponesse l'assedio a Brescia, stando che era nemico de nostri illustrissimi Signori. Basta ch'ella mi parlò con tale amorevolezza dietro al viaggio, che subbito li restai pregione, di sorte che non solamente io non sapeva vivere senza lei, ma anco mia moglie, e tutta la mia famiglia; vero è che la detta mia sorella mentre ch'era maritata praticava con lei, ma più s'intrinsicò quando, del 1528, fu privata del suo consorte. Onde, stando la detta Madre in casa nostra, era ogni giorno vesitata dalla mattina sino alla sera, non solo da molti religiosi et persone assai spirituali, ma ancora da gentildonne et gentilhuomini, et d'altre diverse persone di Cremona et di Milano, poiché ve ne erano assai che seguivano il Duca suo che all'hora vi si trovava; di che ogn'uno si maravigliava della gran sapientia ch'era in lei, perché si vedeva ch'ella convertiva molti a muttare vita, come io ne ho conosciuto pur assai che sono morti, et anco alcuni pochi, che [942<sup>r</sup>] sono ancora vivi, così in Milano, come in Cremona. Ella vi stete sino ch'el detto Imperatore, doppo l'incoronatione, hebbe fatto pace con li nostri Signori, et poi ritornò a Brescia col detto messer Girolamo Patengola, dove habitò sin che morì, che fu del 1540 adi 12 Marzo.

Venendo poi alla vita sua, dico, per quanto ho più fiate inteso, ch'ella cominciò da cinque o sei anni a fare astinentia (per i buoni documenti del padre), et starsi ritirata dalle genti, acciò maggiormente potesse darsi all'orationi et divottioni. Et quanto più cresceva nell'età, tanto più si dava a quelle, et alla vita contemplativa, di maniera ch'ella pigliò l'habito detto del terzo ordine, accioché havesse più commodità, dell'andare alle messe, alli confessioni et alli communioni, poiché allora non si concedeva il communicarsi spesso alle persone laice, come di tempo in tempo ogn'hora più è stato frequentato, per haver largato la mano i Sacerdotti, i quali hanno havuto in maggior stima la communione di quello ch'era tenuta a quei tempi.

Basta ch'essa venne a stare in Brescia (per quanto ho udito dire) circa il 1516, et habitò in casa de messer Giovanni Antonio Romano, mercante, fino che io la condusse del 1529 (come ho detto) a Cremona, et ritornata habitò alcuni mesi a Santo Clemente in due mie camare che [942<sup>v</sup>] gli feci ordinare; et parte anco appresso Santo Barnaba, et poi tutto il tempo che visse nella casa delli Reverendi Frati di

Santa Affra a canto la fontana pubblica.

In questi anni ella fece il viaggio di Hierusaleme, nel quale perse la vista nell'andarvi, nondimeno mi disse che, essendo condutta di luogo in luogo di quelle sanctissime divottioni, sempre le vide con gli occhi interiori, come se l'havesse vedute con gl'esteriori; et doppo, essendovi ritornata la vista in Brescia, andò in Roma con doi sacerdoti preti spirituali; et come fu venuta in Brescia, poco doppo andò alla devottione del monte Verale; ma perché all'hora era se non comincia, lì ritornò poi del 1532, di agosto, essendovi ancora io et la detta mia sorella, dove, di quatordeci ch'eravamo, tutti sono morti se non io. Basta che ivi ella vi ritrovò assai capelle et luoghi fatti alla similitudine ch'erano, et anco sono in Hierusaleme, in Betheleme, et in altri luoghi di Terra Santa, cose in vero di grandissime divottione, che si possono vedere et considerare senza solcare il mare.

Mentre che questa reverenda Madre visse, tanti anni fu sempre di gran giovamento a moltissime persone, poiché si consigliavano con lei, o per muttar vita, o per sopportare le tribulationi, o per fare testamenti, o per pigliar moglie, o per maritare figliuole et figliuoli, oltre che non mancavano [943<sup>r</sup>] mai a fare delle paci, come erano moglie con mariti, i figliuoli coi padri, i fratelli con fratelli, et così diversemente de molti altri secondo li loro gradi: consigliando, et consolando ciascuno quanto

più poteva, di maniera che le sue opere havevano più tosto del divino che dell'humano, sì come ella era sempre in continova asprezza di vivere, sopportando aspri caldi, estremi freddi, rabbiosa fame, et privandosi della commodità del dormire, poiché quello poco dormire suo lo faceva sopra di una nuda stuora, et con un legno sotto il capo, di modo che dinanzi giorno la rivoltava in un rituolo, dove non si vedeva altri letti, né lettère, et manco si vedeva sorte alcuna di vaselli di vino, atteso che non beveva mai vino, o altre bevande, eccetto che aqua sempre. Vero è che, nella gran festa di Natale et della Resurettione, per solennizarle maggiormente, beveva al desinare un sol dito di vino, mangiando sempre poco pane, ma sì bene delli frutti, et delli herbaggi, et anco di questi con grande parsimonia.

Et però con raggione li medici che la medicavano nelle sue infirmità, dicevano ch'ella haveva contratta un'altra natura, fuori di quella che comunamente si vede nelle altre genti, perché ritrovavano che quasi sempre le medecine che pigliava se le convertivano in sustantia, et non in purgarla, o [943°] nel sanarla, come per l'ordinario fanno a noi altri; là onde si può dire ch'ella si lasciava medicare più tosto per non scandalizare quelle persone che havevano cura di lei, che perché le medecine vi giovassero, poi che più volte si sanava col mangiare delle cipolle, porri, o con altre cose simili, le quali erano secondo la propria natura di lei, senza che alle volte,

essendo stata infirma più giorni, si sanava ancora col lavarsi la testa.

Ma tutto è niente a rispetto di quello che allei occorse in Cremona (a conformità, ch'ella non si sanava se non con cose straordinarie) onde, essendo stata amalata per molti dì et talmente aggravata, che noi tutti aspettavamo che ad hora ad hora pasasse di questa vita, di modo che'l detto Patengola fece versi di tal tenore:

#### Epitafio

Quella che 'l nome, l'opre, et la favella D'Angelo tenne, qui sepolta giace. Vergine visse in taciturna cella, Godendo ivi la vera interna pace. Di Dio diletta, obediente ancella Fu adversaria a ciò ch'al senso piace; Or vive lieta in cielo, incoronata Di palme il crin, tra gli Angeli beata.

[944] I quali leggendoli a lei, et dicendo: allegrative, Madre, che dimane si poneranno questi versi sopra la vostra sepoltura, et ella, levandosi subito in settone, et credendo che così havessi da essere, parlò con vehementia della felicità di quella patria celeste non meno d'una meza hora, che li resplendì sempre la faccia come se fusse stata un cherubino; di maniera che non solamente per li tanti ch'erano nella camara (et ben piena) li pareva essere in paradiso, ma anche per la grandissima allegrezza ch'haveva di partirsi da questo mondo, come sempre di continovo desiderava, ella recuperò talmente le forze del corpo, che, accortasi esser partita tutta l'infirmità, subbito cominciò a piangere et dolersi grandamente del detto Patengola, imputandolo che havesse fatto questo solamente per ingannarla, et non perché egli credesse ch'ella dovesse morire. Onde, giurando che l'haveva fatto ogni cosa pensando fermamente ch'ella dovesse fenire sua vita inanzi che fusse il giorno sequente, et non mai per fargli cosa alcuna in dispiacere.

Cose assai in vero stupende potrei dire di lei, fra le quali è stupendissima quella

che, non essendogli mai insegnato pur l'alphabeto, et non di meno non solo leggeva una quantità de libri santi, ma anco ho veduto assai volte andar da lei più religiosi, et in specialità predicatori [944<sup>v</sup>] et theologhi a domandarli la dichiaratione sopra molti passi de Psalmi, de Propheti,dell'Apocalipse, et di tutto il Testamento Novo et Vecchio, et sentire da lei tale espositione che ne rimanevano stupefatti, là onde si poteva dire che questa donna haveva più tosto del divino che dell'humano; et però non è maraviglia s'ella faceva tant'aspra vita, et lodava così caldamente la verginità, la castità, i digiuni, le confessioni, le comunioni, et le orationi, poiché si comunicava tutti quei dì che poteva, stando al Sacramento più hore della mattina ad udire le messe; et così, perché era di pochissimo sonno, è da credere che la maggior parte della notte facesse orationi, contemplando speculando quelle cose divine che a pochissime persone sono concesse, spendendo poi tutto il giorno in buoni officii diversamente col prossimo, overo nel fare le orationi per lei et per li peccatori, non mancandogli a leggere delli libri santi, quando non vi erano delle persone che l'occupassero in qualche buona opera. Poi del tutto questa Reverenda Madre fu sempre lontanissima dalli visioni, et inimicissima de coloro che si avantavano di vederne diversamente, poi che le teneva per anime più perdute che non sono l'infedeli, che conoscendo ella che di queste persone non si lasciavano pigliare che del tutto erano ingannati dal demonio, il quale si trasfigura in ange[945<sup>1</sup>]lo di luce, come dice Santo Paulo nella seconda alli Corinti, che per verità alli tempi di lei v'erano persone assai che si compiacevano in queste visioni del venerdi, o mercori, stando immobili con li brazzi aperti per più hore, et ve n'erano che si gloriavano havere li sticmati nelle mani, et haver terminato, et è poco dubbio che queste povere anime non siano sepolte nell'inferno.

Basta che questa benedetta Madre mi fece conoscere benissimo questi così essecrabili errori con un suo essempio, che nei primi anni li apparse Satan in forma d'un angelo, il quale era di tanta bellezza, che non vi è persona che lo potesse credere o immaginare; ma Iddio, ch'hebbe pietà alla purità di quella candida anima, la illuminò di tal sorte che subito si distesse con la faccia a terra cridando: va nell'Inferno, inimico della croce, poi ch'io conosco che non son degna di vedere alcun angelo di Dio; et così si disparve subito. Et questo riccordo veramente fu quello che mi confirmò assai più ch'ella fusse gran serva d'Iddio, che non mi fecero mai quanto opere sante vide in Lei, percioché sempre in lei fu una profonda umiltà, la qual è la vera corona de tutti l'altre virtù, poiché queste sono del tutto vanissime, quando il fondamento della santissima umiltà manca.

Una cosa sola esteriore mi pare di dire, la quale sì come per le cose ch'io ho raccontato, habbiamo cagione [945<sup>v</sup>] grande di credere che questa essemplar Madre fusse in vero grande serva del Signore mentre che visse, così doppo morte quasi tutta la città vide per cosa certissima, ch'essendo tenuto il suo corpo scoperto per trenta giorni vestito nel cadiletto nel luogo di beati seppolti nelle capelle che sono sotto alla chiesa di Santa Affra, non solamente in tanti giorni non rendete cattivo odore, ma sempre li brazzi et mani anco si snodavano talmente di membro in membro, che palpando et calcando ogni parte di quella carne ritornava a sé, come fa ad ogni persona viva.

Interrogatus si aliud scit de ipsa: Io potrei dire assai altre cose che sarebbeno di edificationi a noi, ma perché sarei troppo longo, mi pare honesto che faccia fine, havendo però detto le cose più notabili; et così, rendendo gratia al Signor Dio che mi ha concesso di dire questa verità, non dirò altro, et haec sunt etc.

L.S. Ego Joannes Baptista quondam domini Joannis Faustini de Nazaris dictus de Sayanis Imperiali auctoritate notarius civis et habitator Brixiae his omnibus iustificationibus praesens fui et rogatus. Et quia aliis occupatus per alium transcribere feci, et quia cum principali auscultavi, et concordare inveni, ideo in fidem praemissorum et signo meo solito apposito me subscripsi.

## 17. Vita

Città del Vaticano, Archivio Segreto Vaticano, S.C.Rituum, Processus 341, ff. 927v-936v.

Libro della Vita della Reverenda et quasi beata Madre suor Angela, fondatrice della Compagnia di S. Orsola di Brescia, con le Iustificationi di essa vita; et anco si contiene il voto delle Vergini di detta Regola.

Alle nobili Matrone, le signore Bianca Porcelaga, Veronica Butia, Isabetta Prata, Leonella Pedezocha, Natività Bargnana, Camilla Tayetta, Giulia et Laura Trusse, et Lucretia Offlaga, rettrici et governatrici della Regola di Santa Orsola di Brescia.

Giovanni Battista Nazzari Bresciano

Quanto più tra me considero et contemplo il principio di questa dignissima Compagnia (Magnifice Madonne), tanto più maraviglioso resto di quella solennissima pianta ch'habbia essa Compagnia principiata, et poi prodotti sì buoni et pretiosi frutti. Più in oltre poi, trascorrendo di maraviglia, resto convinto et invagito quando trascorro sì la triforme natura di questa solennissima pianta, cioè di cedro, cipresso et palma, sì la qualità de suoi frutti, i quali ponto non temendo l'aspre tempeste, gl'impetuosi venti et le maligne nebbie et piogge, solo si nutriscono et compiaceno del calore del splendente sole et della celeste roggiada, quanto della moltitudine di vaghissimi augelli, che, con la sonora harmonia della loro voce, empiscono l'aere et intonano l'orecchie con maraviglia di quelli che gli odono. Onde, desiderando di far conoscere questa sì benedetta pianta a tutte voi, no [928<sup>r</sup>] bilissime Madonne, a tutta la Regola vostra et a chiunque desidera saper il principio di questa laudatissima Compagnia, dico che questa nostra pretiosa et triforme pianta non esser stata altra che la reverenda Madre Suor Angela; la quale, come cedro, rendeva un fragrante odore d'una divulgata fama, che, penetrando i cuori degl'huomini, restavano di lei presi di spiritual amore.

In oltre, essendo lei come cipresso che (oltre l'odore) è di quell'alberi che più s'inalcia verso il cielo, cioè ch'essa sempre con le orationi et con i pensieri levando la mente al cielo verso il Signore, i suoi giorni trapassava in utile di sé et prossimo suo; et anche essendo qual palma, che si piega verso il peso soprapostovi, così essa, non risguardando a fatiche et disaggi, ogn'or si trovava più forte et fervente.

Onde non è stata maraviglia, se così felicissima pianta abbia prodotto così pretiosi et honorati frutti, cioè questa congregatione de Vergini, le quali, sempre pugnando contro l'adversità, vanità et fallacia del mondo, con un cristiano amore et con una fraterna charità, perseverano nella via del Signore. Onde sopra essa solenne pianta (cioè Congregatione) vi stanno augelli, cioè angeli, che di continuo allegrandosi fanno una sonora harmonia cantando il «Te Deum laudamus». Per il che, con

licentia del reverendissimo Episcopo nostro, et de Regenti d'essa Regola, havend'io preso questo carico di dare in luce la Vita d'essa reverenda Madre, mi è parso prender le giustificationi di lei, et [928<sup>v</sup>] per rogito serbarle; et da quelle extrahere la presente faticha, la quale mi è parso consacrare a voi, honorate Madonne, come di detta Regola rettrici et governatrici; la qual cosa, accettandola insieme col mio buon e spiritual amore, a ogni vostro commodo leggere la potretti. La qual vita è come segue.

#### VITA ET MORTE DELLA REVERENDA MADRE SUOR ANGELA

In Desenzano, villa situata alla occidental ripa del lago Benaco, soggetta alla magnifica città di Brescia, si trovava un messer Gioanni Merico, il quale haveva due figliuole, la più piccola delle quali haveva nome Angela. La quale, odendo spesso leggere al padre sì la vita delli Sancti come delle sancte Vergine, cominciò da fanciulla solecitare i degiuni et le orationi, nelle quali perseverando, morì il suo caro padre, et non molto tempo doppo la sua tanto amata sorella; la quale, mentre visse, fu non solamente buona sorella, ma et compagna di Angela nei degiuni et astinentie. Angela, ritrovandosi sola senza la cara sorella, gli venne desìo di sapere se l'anima di quella era salita ne'felici beni della gloria eterna; onde faceva cotidiani prieghi al Signore; dil che un giorno essa, ritrovandosi fuori di Desenzano in un suo campicello, et facendo le sue solite orationi con più fervore, ecco che nel mezzo giorno vide una schiera d'angeli in aere, nel mezzo di quali [929<sup>r</sup>] v'era l'anima della sua dolcissima sorella tutta felice et trionfante, et in un subbito et velocità si sparve detta schiera d'angioli.

Laonde vi restò nella mente la veduta anima in modo che, sempre pensando di quella, più ardentemente solicitavasi nei digiuni et orationi; onde, quanto più cresceva nella età, tanto più si dava a quelle, in modo che Satana, nemico de fedeli, volendo con qualche via (ingannandola) farla precipitare dalla prencipiata vita, gli parse in forma d'un angelo, il qual era di tanta bellezza, che non vi è persona che lo potesse imaginare. Ma Iddio, che non abbandona i servi suoi, et ch'ebbe pietà alla purità di quella candida serva et verginella sua, la illuminò talmente che subito essa si distese con la faccia a terra, gridando: «Va nell'inferno, nemico della croce et persecutore de fedeli, poich'io ben conosco che, essendo io peccatrice, non son degna di vedere alcun angelo d'Iddio». Il demonio, di ciò schernito, con impeto si sparve.

Havendo la serva del Signore Angela veduto che per voler divino s'era liberata da questo aspetto del demonio, più pacientemente et con più fervore si dava alla vita contemplativa, di modo che pigliò l'habito terzebito, detto del Terzo Ordine de Frati Osservanti di Santo Francesco, accioché havesse più comodità dell'andar alle sancte messe, alle [929<sup>v</sup>] devote confessioni et alle sacrosante communioni, poiché in quel tempo non si concedeva il communicarsi alle persone laice così spesso, come poi, di tempo in tempo ogn'hora più, è stato frequentato per haver largato la mano i sacerdoti, i quali hanno havuto in maggior stima la communione, di quello che era tenuta a quei tempi.

Onde poi del MDXVI venne in Brescia a visitar madonna Catarina, moglie del quondam messer Giovanni Battista Patengola, solo per consolarla intorno la morte de duoi suoi figliuoli, ove poi si restò per molti mesi; nel qual tempo, essendo più fiate visitata da messer Antonio Romano, gli pigliò affettione, in modo che più fiate pregata da lui, gli fece gratia d'andare ad habitar nelle sue case separatamente.

Havvenne non molto doppo che la reverenda Madre Suor Angela, intendendo della vita et fama della reverenda Madre Suor Osana di Mantova, se deliberò d'andarla a visitare; ond'essa, partitase da Brescia insieme con messer Antonio Romano, andò a Mantova, et nel ritorno passò per Solfrino, ove visitò il Signor Alovisio da Castione et la sua consorte; il quale, per haverla per avanti conosciuta per fama, cortesemente la ricevete; et la causa perché si trasferì dal detto Signor Aloviso fu, perché esso haveva bandito un parente della reverenda Madre et confiscatoli i beni; et così pregò il detto Signor Alovisio, [930<sup>r</sup>] in modo che, ottenendo la gratia, essa liberò il bandegiato suo parente, et fugli restituiti i beni suoi.

Havendo messer Antonio Romano havuto già più anni desiderio di visitare i luoghi di Terra Sancta, fu pregato caldamente dalla Madre Suor Angela che non gli andasse senza di lei. Onde, circa l'anno MDXXIIII, havendo già deliberato il detto Romano far detto viaggio, et più, venutali nova da Venetia come la solita nave di peregrini non si partiva da Venetia, si parti per andar alla fera di Lanzano; onde, passando per Venetia et vedendo fuori il stendardo della detta nave peregrinesca, fu da lui avisata la Madre Suor Angela, la quale a tempo partitasi da Brescia insieme con un Bartholomeo Biancoso da Salò, suo fidato parente, gionse a Venetia dal detto messer Antonio. Venuto il giorno della partita della nave, tutti i peregrini, accompagnati secondo il solito da quelli Signori nel fare la processione del Corpo del nostro Signore, s'imbarcaron. I quali, datti ch'ebbero vela, gionsero alla Canea, ove la Madre Suor Angela, forsi per la fumosità del mare, o per le incommodità del viaggio, quasi in tutto perse la vista. Niente di meno, così cieca, fu menata per tutti quelli santi luoghi, notificandoli ciò che erano, là dove de uno in uno vi faceva caldissime orationi. Ma quando gionse al luogo nel quale fu crucifisso il Redemptore del mondo, allhora ella pianse longamente prostrata [930<sup>v</sup>] in genochione, basciando più et più volte quella beatissima terra che fu fatta degna di ricevere il preciosissimo sangue di Giesù, sparso per i miseri peccatori; così, condotta di luogo in luogo di quelle santissime divotioni, sempre le vide con gl'occhi interiori, come se l'havesse vedute con gl'esteriori.

Revisitati quelli luoghi, et volendosi partire la nave per ritornare a Venetia, tutti i peregrini v'entrorno; nel qual viaggio hebbero molte avversità et fortuna di mare; fra le quali, essendo stata la nave alquanti giorni in Candia, nel partirsi la sera de Santo Francisco, la si accompagnò con duoi altre navi che volevano venir a Venetia; onde, levandosi grandissima fortuna (che durò di continuo nove giorni), nel terzo dì le sventurate due si summersero con tutte le robbe et genti, et quella peregrinesca, essendo portata in Barbaria, dopo molti travaglii sì dalla fortuna del mare come dall'armata turchesca, per le orationi della detta Madre et mediante l'infinita buontà de Iddio, finalmente li portò la nave a Venetia, là dove stete per alquanti giorni a riposare. Nel qual tempo, essendo alloggiata la detta Madre Suor Angela con le Monache in Santo Sepolcro, era visitata di continovo da religiosi et gentilhuomini et gentildonne spirituali, et d'altre persone divote; et havendola levata da [931] quel luogo alcuni nobili spirituali et condotta nell'Hospitale delli Incurabili, era medesimamente visitata da molte genti divote; ove, venendovi alcuni magnifici gentilhuomini per nome delli magnifici Signori soprastanti dei Luoghi Pii per interrogarla della vita et scientia sua, i quali, ritrovandola come si diceva di buonissima essemplarità, la pregarono instantemente ch'essa restasse in Venetia per beneficio di quelli Luoghi Pii; et essa humanamente si scusò, percioché grandemente desiderava di ridursi alla sua diletta città di Brescia. Et così, non volendo aspettare il seguente giorno (accioché da lei non fossero ritornati forsi col reverendissimo Patriarca, o suo Messo, quelli magnifici Signori, al quale per sancta obedientia li havesse dovuto obedire) quella istessa sera si parti da Venetia; et vene a Brescia il giorno di Santa Catharina.

Doppo un certo tempo, la Madre Suor Angela, desiderosa di visitare le Sanctissime Reliquie che sono in Roma (havendogli il Signor Iddio retituito la vista), fece quello viaggio con duoi reverendi Sacerdoti. Onde, essendo gionta in Roma, visitò quelle Sacre Reliquie. Et mente ciò faceva, ecco che a caso fu veduta da un messer Piero della Puglia, Cameriero di Sua Sanctità; il quale, perché si trovò nella nave nel viaggio di Terra Sancta, oltra moltissime et amorevoli parole et offerte, la condusse a basciare [931<sup>v</sup>] il piede del Beatissimo Padre; il quale, havendo già odito della bonissima vita sua, la pregò che volesse restare ivi in Roma nei Luoghi Pii; et ella, con humilissime parole scusandosi (perché haveva in animo di principiare la divota Regola di Santa Orsola, cioè congregatione delle Vergine, sicome anco fece), si partì da Sua Sanctità con buona licentia et ritornò a Brescia tutta giubilosa per haver visitato quelle divote Reliquie.

Doppo alquanto tempo, ritrovandosi in Brescia il Duca di Milano alloggiato in Santo Barnaba, del MDXXVIII, et intendendo della buona fama della detta Madre, la mandò a pregare volesse venir da lui; onde, andatali et esso recevutala, con molte benigne parole la pregò con grande instantia che fusse contenta d'accettarlo per suo figliuolo spirituale, et in protettione appresso Dio lo Stato suo. Delle quali cose, doppo alcune parole consolatorie, ella promisse di pregare Sua divina Maestà; et

così parti da Sua Eccellenza.

L'anno seguente, essendo andata a visitare il luogo del Verale per vedere le devottioni che sono sopra il suo monte, delle cose sante che si trovano in Hierusalem, nel suo ritorno passò per Milano, et visitò il detto Eccellente Duca. Il quale, recevendola con dolcissime parole, la pregò sommamente ch'ella restasse in Milano; la quale, iscusandosi con prudentia, pigliò licentia et venne a Brescia, ove vi stette puoco: percioché l'istesso anno messer Agostino Gallo [932<sup>r</sup>] et madonna Hippolita vedova sua sorella, volendo andare a Cremona per habitarvi, si partì con loro la detta Madre insieme, et messer Hieronimo Patengola, et andorono a Cremona nelle case del detto Gallo appresso Santo Vittore; nel cui viaggio parlò la detta Madre tali parole amorevoli et divote di maniera che non solamente il detto messer Agostino non sapeva vivere senza spesso odire la detta Madre, ma et anche la sua famiglia. Vero è che la detta madonna Hippolita haveva (mentre era maritata) presa di lei famigliarità, ma più s'intrinsicò nel detto viaggio.

Stando la detta Madre Suor Angela in Cremona per alquanti giorni (sì fra tanto che l'Imperatore si quietasse col Senato Veneto al quale intendeva mover guerra, et massime a Brescia), come per alcuni suoi importanti negotii era spesso visitata da diversi religiosi et persone spirituali sì di Cremona, come di Milano; dil che ogn'uno si maravigliava della sua sapientia. Et mentre stette in Cremona, s'nfirmò,

di sorte che stette in termine di morte, come si dirà più avanti.

Fatta poi che fu la pace tra l'Imperatore et l'Illustrissimo Senato Veneto, essa venne di novo a Brescia, et habitò nelle case del detto messer Agostino; onde poi, dell'anno MDXXXII, insieme col Gallo sodetto et sua sorella, et dodeci altri compagni spirituali andò al monte Verale, che allhora [932<sup>v</sup>] era fornito di quelle devottioni et capelle; quai luoghi erano fatti alla similitudine ch'erano, et anco sono, in Hierusalem, in Betheleme, et in altri luoghi di Terra Sancta; cose in vero di grandis-

sime divottioni, che si possono vedere et considerare senza solcare il tempestuoso mare.

Visitato ch'hebbe questo degno luogo, ritornò a Brescia et habitò a Sant'Affra, ove già per avanti havendo datto principio alla degna Compagnia delle Vergini sotto nome della Regola di Santa Orsola, dell'anno poi MDXXXVII fu stabilita percioché allora, ritrovandovisi putte numero settantasei, et cinque nobile Matrone, fu da quelle eletta la detta Madre per sua spiritual madre, priora, ministra et retrice; la qual cosa fu confirmata dal reverendissimo Vescovo, et dopo la sua morte fu confirmatata dal Summo Pontefice, come nella Bolla Papale si contiene.

Venendo poi al resto della sua vita, con brevissime parole dico ch'era, il vivere et la vita di questa reverenda Madre, sì fattamente, che di sé spargevasi non solamente nella Lombardia, ma et anche sin in Roma; percioché, essendosi sin da fanciulla (per maggior astinenza) usata in cibi vili, mai non mangiava carne di sorte alcuna (se non in caso d'infermità), ma solamente frutti et herbaggi, et insalata con aceto et sale, senza oglio, bevendo sempre acqua et non altra bevanda, oltre che ogn'anno, dall'Assensione del Nostro Signore sin alla Pentecoste, non mangiava eccetto un sol pasto in[933<sup>r</sup>]quei nove giorni, digiunando poi tutto l'anno i venerdì con pane et acqua; et così faceva tutta la Quadragesima, eccetto che nelli venerdì quadragesimali non mangiava cosa alcuna. In questo modo l'opre sue parevano più tosto divine che humane, conciosia ch'ella era sempre in continova asprezza di vivere, supportando aspri caldi, estremi freddi, rabiose fame, et privandosi delle commodità del dormire, poiché quel poco dormir suo faceva sopra d'una stuora e con un legno sotto il capo, di modo che, inanzi giorno, la rivolgeva in un rituolo, dove non si vedeva altri letti né altre lettère, et manco si vedeva sorte alcuna de vaselli di vino, atteso che non beveva vino o altre bevande, eccetto che sempre acqua, com'è detto.

Vero è che, nella gran festa di Natale et della Resurrettione (per solennizzarle maggiormente) beveva al desinare un sol dito di vino, mangiando sempre puoco pane, ma sì bene delli frutti et delli herbaggi, et anco de questi con gran parsimonia. Et però, con ragione i medici, che la medicavano nelle sue infirmità, dicevano ch'ella haveva contratta un altra natura fuori di quella che comunamente si vede nelle altre genti, percioché ritrovavano che quasi sempre le medicine che pigliava se le convertivano in sostantia et non in purgarla, o nel sanarla, come per l'ordinario fanno a noi altri. [933°] Là onde si può dire ch'ella si lasciava medicare più tosto per non scandelizare quelle persone che havevano cura di lei, che perché le medicine vi giovassero, poiché più volti si sanava col mangiare cepolle, porri o altri simili cose, le quali erano secondo la propria natura di lei. Senza che alle volte, essendo stata infirma più giorni, si sanava ancora col lavarsi la testa.

Ma di maraviglia fu quello che gli occorse in Cremona (a conformità di quello ch'ella non guariva se non per alcune cose straordinarie), ove, essendo stata amalata per molti giorni, et talmente aggravata che messer Agostino Gallo et il Patengola sodetto aspettavano che ad hora ad hora pasasse di questa vita, di modo ch'el detto Patengola fece versi, quali contenevano così:

Quella che 'l nome, l'opre et la favella D'Angelo tenne, qui sepolta giace. Vergine visse in taciturna cella, Godendo ivi la vera interna pace. Di Dio diletta, obediente ancella, Fu adversaria a ciò che al senso piace; Or vive lieta in cielo, incoronata Di palme il crin, tra gli Angeli beata.

I quali legendoli a lei, et dicendo: «Allegratevi, Madre, che dimane si poneranno questi versi sopra la vostra sepoltura», ella, levan[934]dosi subito in settone, et credendo che così havessi da essere, parlò non meno d'una mezza hora con tanta vehementia della felicità di quella celeste patria, che sempre li risplendé la faccia come se fusse stata un cherubino; di maniera che, non solamente per li tanti ch'ivi erano nella camera (ch'era ben piena) li pareva esser in paradiso, ma anche per la grandissima allegrezza ch'haveva di partirsi da questo mondo, come sempre lei desiderava (imitando Santo Pavolo che diceva: Cupio dissolvi et esse cum Christo), ella recuperò talmente le forze del corpo che, accortasi essere partita tutta l'infermità, subito cominciò a piangere et dolersi grandemente del detto Patengola, imputandolo c'havesse fatto questo solamente per ingannarla et non perché egli credesse che la dovesse morire; onde giurò esso haver fatto ogni cosa, pensando fermamente ch'ella dovesse fenire sua vita inanzi che fusse il giorno seguente, et non mai per farle cosa alcuna in dispiacere.

Hora, venendo alla dottrina sua: pareva ch'havesse del divino percioché, non essendoli mai insegnato pur l'alphabeto, non solo leggeva una quantità di libri santi, m'ancora si è visto assai volte andar da lei religiosi, et in specialità predicatori et theologi, a domandargli la espositione sopra molti passi de Psalmi, de Profeti, dell'Apocalisse et di tutto il Testamento Novo et Vecchio; et essi, odendo da lei degne espositioni, et partendosi, rimanevano stupefatti. Là onde si poteva dire che questa reverenda Madre haveva più tosto del divino che dell'humano.

In oltre, non è maraviglia s'ella facesse tant'aspra vita, et lodava[934°]così caldamente la verginità, la castità, i degiuni, le confessioni, le communioni et le orationi, poiché si comunicava tutti quei dì che poteva, stando al Santissimo Sacramento più hore della mattina, et a odire molte messe; et perché anche era di pochissimo sonno, era da credere che la maggior parte della notte facesse orationi, contemplando et speculando quelle cose divine che a pochissime persone son concesse, spendendo poi tutt'il giorno in buoni officii diversamente col prossimo, overo nel fare le orationi per lei et per i peccatori, non mancando a leggere dei libri santi, quando non v'erano persone che l'occupasse in qualche pia opera.

In questo modo, mentre che questa reverenda Madre visse, fu sempre di gran giovamento a moltissime persone, poiché si consigliavano con lei, o per mutar vita, o per sopportare le tribulationi, o per far testamenti et matremonii, oltre che non mancava di far delle paci fra marito et moglie, fra fratelli et fratelli, fra padri et figliuoli, et fra parenti; et così diversamente de molti altri, secondo i loro gradi, quietava le discordie: sicome vi occorse fare quella pace, che non puoté mai ottenere l'Eccellentissimo Duca d'Urbino, et manco i Magnifici signori Rettori, essendosi sfidati a combattere in steccato i nobili messer Philippo Sala et messer Giovan Francesco Martinengo. In questo modo adonque trasportò la sua vita, che in lei non si conosciva effetto alcuno cattivo, perché essa era aliena dall'ambittione, dalla vanaglo[935]ria, dall'ira, et solo si compiaceva nell'humiltà, nella vita contemplativa et religiosa, perseverando in essa vita (com'è detto di sopra) et via del Signore con digiuni, vigilie et orationi, in modo che, come vera religiosa, era sempre stabile nella fede, humile nelle conversationi, honesta et essemplare nei costumi, giusta nelle

opere, pia nei fatti, rigida nelle astinentie, assidua nelle vigilie, fervente nelle orationi, patientissima nelle avversità, devotissima nei Sacramenti, et probatissima in tutte

le opere christiane.

In oltre, essendo stata in caso da esser ingannata dal demonio, essa del tutto et sempre fu lontanissima dalle visioni; anzi, era contraria a coloro che si avantavano de haverne vedute diversamente, poiché le teneva per anime più perdute che non sono gl'infedeli, conoscendo che del tutto erano ingannate dal demonio, il quale si trasfigurava in angelo di luce (come dice Santo Pavolo nella seconda Epistola ai Corinthi). Et, in verità, ai tempi di lei v'erano persone assai, che si compiacevano in certi loro visioni, come nel venerdì o mercordì, stando essi immobili con li brazzi aperti per più hore; oltre che se ne ritrovavano di quelle persone che si gloriavano havere le stimate nelle mani, come Santo Francesco, et di havere terminato et veduto cose maravigliose; et è da credere che quelle infelici anime siano sepolte nell'inferno. Et così, essa reverenda Madre, per non incorrere in qualche errore o lac-

cio del demonio, non credeva ponto a visioni alcune.

Venuto l'estremo tempo della sua vita, et ritrovandosi essa da molti visitata, fra gli altri fu visitata dalli signori Giacomo Chizzola et Tomaso Gavardo, i[935<sup>v</sup>]quali visti, levossi in settone, et feceli un bell'essordio intorno al vivere christiano. Et volendo poi essi partirsi, fu pregata dal detto signor Thomaso che lei vi lasciasse qualche spiritual documento, et ella rispose: «Fate in vita quello che voresti haver fatto al tempo della morte», et con questo fine alli 12 Marzo 1540 passò di questa vita, lasciando adietro la sua diletta Compagnia de circa Vergine centocinquanta, oltre l'altre nobili Matrone; dalla quale Compagnia, et da infinite altre persone spirituali, fu accompagnata alla chiesa sua parochiale di Santa Affra; il cui corpo essendo reposto sotto la chiesa nel luogho ove sono li corpi dei Santi Martiri, stete sopra terra nel cadeletto per trenta giorni; nel qual tempo non rendete mai cattivo odore, et sempre li bracci et le mani si snodavano talmente di membro in membro, che, palpando et calcando, ogni parte di quella carne ritornava a sé, come fa ad ogn'altra persona viva; la quale, sicome visse tenendo la vita christiana (narrata di sopra), così doppo morte vive nel regno della felicità eterna. Passato il tempo delli detti giorni trenta, che stete sopra terra, fu sotterato il suo corpo, et a perpetua memoria fugli fatto un corrispondente deposito per il reverendo Padre Don Giovan Francesco de Saramondi, canonico regulare in Santa Affra.

Questa reverenda Madre, adunque, diede (mentre visse) tale essempio di sé col modo del religioso suo vivere, che s'è introdotto in questa nostra Magnifica città di Brescia,[936<sup>r</sup>] nel sesso feminile, un habito di vivere tutto tendente al bene et ubi-

dientia della Sedia Apostolica, che consiste nel timore et honore d'Iddio.

Se tutte le attioni adonque di questa nostra quasi beata Madre (insiema con la virtù et prudentia, che consentevano al principio et al mezzo, con che sanctamente venivano da lei incominciate) saranno da noi considerate, non potremo altramente fare, havendo noi la grandezza dell'animo temperata con somma humanità, che con essemplare conversatione et religioso vivere scacciar dall'animo nostro la nebbia di tristi pensieri, accioché possiamo salire alla gloria della vita eterna.

(Hoc loci prostat in originali libro graphice descripta forma antiqui sepulchri Beatae Angelae <sup>1</sup>, cui subduntur sequentes Inscriptiones maiuscolo charactere expressae):

<sup>1</sup> D12.

#### Reverendi Domini Valeriani Bergomensis Canonici Regularis

Proposito martyr, virgo actibus, ore magistra, Sic tribus aureolis Angela dives ovas. Angela, nuper eras morum vitaeque magistra, Nunc patriae tutrix praesidiumque veni.

#### Eiusdem

Angela viva fui, nunc Angela mortua dicor; Sum tamen angelicis Angela iuncta choris. Vos qui me nostis, exemplo vivite nostro: Sic facite ut docui; mortua adhuc doceo.

#### Cuiusdam de Zanettis Legis Doctoris

Conditur hoc tumulo, cui nomen et insuper omnis Vita fuit superis aequiparanda choris. Angela divisa est tria per loca: corpus in urna, Spiritus in caelo, nomen in ore virum.

#### Domini Gabrielis Cozzani Litterarum professoris

Angela virtutum varia redimita corona
Hic iacet, extremo restituenda die.
Spiritus aethereas penetravit fervidus arces
Et summo ingenuus astitit ille Deo.
Illa haec est Virgo quae morum regula viva
Illustrem erexit virginitate chorum.
Brixia (crede mihi) sacrum venerare sepulcrum:
Nil non sancta Deo proxima virgo potest.

# 18. Bolla «Regimini universalis Ecclesiae»

Città del Vaticano, Archivio Segreto Vaticano, Reg. Vat. 1696, ff. 223r-225r (ff. 387r-389r di paginazione antica).

### [nel margine sin]. Blosius electus Fulginatensis

Paulus etc. [Episcopus, servus servorum Dei] ad perpetuam rei memoriam. Regimini universalis Ecclesie licet immeriti, disponente Domino, presidentes, curis angimur assiduis, ut iuxta credite nobis dispensationis officium singularum Agnum immaculatum immitantium, presertim feminei sexus, que mortalis viri thoro contempto castitatem et virginitatem celesti mente actu vovere satagunt, personarum, in quarum utique prosperitate reficimur, piis et salubribus votis huiusmodi, quantum nobis ex alto permittitur, salubriter consulatur, et iis, que propterea ad divini

nominis laudem et gloriam processisse comperimus, ut illibata persistant, cum a nobis petitur, apostolice 1 confirmationis robur adiicimus, et alias desuper providemus, prout in Domino conspicimus, salubriter expedire. Sane, pro parte dilectorum filiorum modernorum gubernatorum et gubernatricum Confraternitatis virginum, sub invocatione sancte Ursule in civitate Brixiensi canonice institute, nobis nuper exhibita petitio continebat: Quod alias nonnulle puelle et alie mulieres virgines, illecebris mundanis et mortalis viri thoro propulsis, Divino Spiritu afflate, sub perpetua virginitate ac odore bone fame in illius, qui speciosus est pre filiis hominum, beneplacitis gratum Altissimo famulatum exhibere ac charitatis et aliis piis operibus intendere cupientes, eandem Confraternitatem ordinarunt et instituerunt, ac pro earum salubri directione et incremento nonnulla statuta [223<sup>v</sup>] et ordinationes fecerunt, quodque postmodum tunc Episcopus Brixiensis seu eius in spiritualibus Vicarius generalis, habens ad id ut asserebat specialem ab eodem episcopo facultatem, illius vigore visis et perlectis statutis et ordinationibus huiusmodi illa ordinaria auctoritate confirmavit et approbavit, prout in patentibus ipsius Episcopi seu Vicarii litteris ac aliis documentis publicis desuper confectis dicitur plenius contineri. Quare pro parte dictorum gubernatorum et gubernatricum nobis fuit humiliter supplicatum, ut institutionem Confraternitatis, ac statuta et ordinationes huiusmodi pro illorum subsistentia firmiori Sedis apostolice munimine 2 roborare, ac alias in premissis opportune providere de benignitate apostolica dignaremur. Nos igitur, qui votis illis ex quibus animarum salus provenire speratur, prout possumus libenter annuimus, prefatos gubernatores et gubernatrices et eorum singulos a quibusvis excommunicationis, suspensionis et interdicti aliisque ecclesiasticis sententiis, censuris et penis a iure vel ab homine quavis occasione vel causa latis, si quibus quomodolibet innodati existant, ad effectum presentium dumtaxat consequendum, harum serie absolventes, et absolutos fore censentes, ac litterarum necnon documentorum predictorum veriores tenores presentibus pro expressis habentes, huiusmodi supplicationibus inclinati, institutionem Confraternitatis ac statuta et ordinationes huiusmodi, nec non prout illa concernunt omnia et singula in eis ac litteris et documentis predictis contenta, et inde secuta quecumque, licita tamen et honesta ac sacris canonibus non contraria, ex certa scientia ac de apostolica potestatis plenitudine, auctoritate apostolica tenore presentium approbamus et confirmamus, ac illis perpetue firmitatis robur adiicimus eaque firmiter perpetuis futuris temporibus observari debere decer[224<sup>r</sup>]nimus omnesque et singulos iuris et facti defectus si qui forsan intervenerint, in eisdem supplemus. Nec non eisdem Confraternitati, illiusque modernis et pro tempore existentibus Gubernatoribus et Gubernatricibus ut quecumque alia statuta et ordinationes licita et honesta, tam circa regimen et tranquillum statum, Confraternitatis virginum predictarum, quam illarum numerum, qualitatem et etatem, ac alia condere, illaque, ut prefertur, condita statuta et ordinationes huiusmodi alterare et mutare ac de novo facere, que postquam condita, alterata, mutata et de novo facta fuerint, eo ipso prefata auctoritate apostolica confirmata sint et esse censeantur, ac quascumque penas in contravenientes apponere possint, diocesani loci licentia minime requisita; quodque virgines prefate et earum singule quecumque legata, relicta, donationes et alias dispositiones de quibusvis rebus et bonis, cuiuscumque qualitatis et quantitatis fuerint, eis sub conditione, quod ali-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Nel mandato esecutoriale, ibidem f. 193 (già 339) si legge «apostolicum».

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Nel mandato esecutoriale, ibidem f. 193v (già 339v) si legge «minime».

quod monasterium monialium ingrediantur, seu religionem profiteantur, aut matrimonium contrahant per quascumque personas, etiam in earum ultimis voluntatibus, etiam sub pena devolutionis aut caducitatis ad alias personas seu loca pia, si contrafecerint, aut alias quomodolibet facta et facienda Confraternitatem ipsam ingrediendo consequi et habere valeant, et per ingressum Confraternitatis predicte testatorum voluntatibus quoad hoc satisfecisse censeantur, in omnibus et per omnia, perinde ac si monasterium ingresse seu religionem professe fuissent, aut matrimonium huiusmodi contraxis[224<sup>v</sup>]sent, auctoritate et tenore predictis concedimus et indulgemus. Decernentes propterea bona huiusmodi devolvi non posse, neque devoluta censeri, sicque per quoscumque iudices, sublata eis et eorum cuilibet quavis aliter iudicandi et interpretandi facultate et auctoritate, iudicari et interpretari debere, irritum quoque et inane, si secus super iis a quoquam quavis auctoritate scienter vel ignoranter contigerit attemptari. Et insuper singulis puellis et virginibus prefatis in die ingressus in dictam Confraternitatem ac etiam obitus earum, plenariam omnium peccatorum suorum indulgentiam et remissionem misericorditer in Domino concedimus et elargimur; ipsamque indulgentiam sub quibusvis revocationibus, suspensionibus et derogationibus similium vel dissimilium indulgentiarum, etiam in favorem fabrice basilice Principis Apostolorum de Urbe ac Cruciate sancte, aut alias per nos et Sedem eandem pro tempore factis, nullatenus comprehensam, sed semper ab illis exceptam esse decernimus, non obstantibus constitutionibus et ordinationibus apostolicis contrariis quibuscumque. Nulli ergo omnino hominum liceat hanc paginam nostre absolutionis, approbationis, confirmationis, adiectionis, suppletionis, concessionis, indulti, elargitionis et decretorum infringere vel ei ausu temerario contraire. Si quis autem hoc attemptare presumpserit, indignationem Omnipotentis Dei ac beatorum Petri et Pauli Apostolorum eius se noverit incursurum.

Datum [225<sup>r</sup>] Rome apud sanctum Petrum, anno Incarnationis Dominice millesimo quingentesimo quadragesimo quarto, quinto Idus Iunii, pontificatus nostri an-

no decimo.

[nel margine destro] V. Bassa

### 19. Mandato esecutoriale «Hodie a nobis»

Città del Vaticano, Archivio Segreto Vaticano, Reg. Vat. 1696, ff. 193r-195r.

[nel margine sin.] Blosius electus Fulginatensis

Paulus etc. [Episcopus, servus servorum Dei], venerabili fratri Episcopo Veronensi et dilectis filiis Archidiacono et Archipresbytero ecclesiae Brixiensis salutem etc. [et apostolicam benedictionem]. Hodie a nobis emanarunt litterae tenoris subsequentis:

[segue la Bolla «Regimini Universalis Ecclesiae», cfr. D18]

Quocirca discretioni vestre per apostolica scripta mandamus, quatenus vos vel duo aut unus vestrum, per vos vel alium seu alios, litteras predictas et in eis contenta quecumque, ubi et quando opus fuerit, ac quotiens pro parte dictorum Gubernatorum et Gubernatricum aut alicuius eorum desuper fueritis requisiti, solemniter publicantes eisque in premissis efficacis defensionis presidio assistentes, faciatis auctoritate nostra litteras et in eis contenta huiusmodi firmiter observari, ac singulos, quos ipse littere concernunt, illis pacifice gaudere, non [195] permittentes eos desuper per quoscumque contra earumdem litterarum tenorem quomodolibet molestari, contradictores quoslibet et rebelles per censuras et penas ecclesiasticas appellatione postposita compescendo ac legitimis super hiis habendis modis processibus censuras et penas ipsas etiam iteratis vicibus aggravando non obstantibus felicis recordationis Bonifacii pape VIII predecessoris nostri qua cavetur ne quis extra suam civitatem vel Diocesim nisi in certis exceptis casibus et in illis ultra unam dietam a fine sue diocesis ad iudicium evocetur seu ne iudices a sede deputati predicta extra civitatem vel Diocesim in quibus deputati fuerint contra quoscumque procedere aut alii vel aliis vices suas committere presumant et de duabus dietis in concilio generali edita dummodo ultra tres dietas aliquis auctoritate presentium non trahatur et aliis apostolicis constitutionibus contrariis quibuscumque aut si aliquibus communiter vel divisim a dicta sit Sede indultum quod interdici suspendi vel excommunicari non possint per litteras apostolicas non facientes plenam et expressam ac de verbo ad verbum de indulto huiusmodi mentionem. Datum Rome apud Sanctum Petrum anno Incarnationis Dominice millesimo quingentesimo quadragesimo quarto, quinto idus Junii. Pontificatus nostri anno decimo.

V. Bassa

### 20. Processo esecutoriale

Brescia, Biblioteca Queriniana, Bernardino Faino, Miscellanea, ms. K.VI.1, ff. 85r-92v. Inedito.

Processo fulminato et essecutoriale della Bolla di Papa Paolo Terzo data in Roma apud S. Petrum anno Incarnationis Dominicae 1544 in confirmatione della Ven. Compagnia delle Vergini di S. Orsola di Brescia.

Reverendissimo in Christo Patri et domino, Domino Dei et Apostolicae Sedis gratia Episcopo Brixiensi, eiusque in spiritualibus et temporalibus Vicario generali, nec non Venerabilibus et circumspectis viris Dominis Archipresbyteris, Prepositis, Prelatis et Canonicis, omnibusque aliis et singulis utriusque sexus personis tam ecclesiasticis quam secularibus in civitate et Dioecesi Brixiensi, ac alias ubilibet constitutis, quorum interest, intererit aut interesse poterit quomodolibet in futurum, quosque infrascriptum tangit negotium, seu tangere poterit, quibuscunque nominibus censeantur, et quacunque praefulgeant dignitate, Aurelius Durantus Archidiaconus Ecclesiae maioris Brixiae, iudex et executor ad infrascripta, una cum quibusdam aliis nostris in hac parte collegis cum illa clausula, quatenus Vos, vel duo, aut unus vestrum etc. a Sancta Sede Apostolica specialiter deputatus, salutem in Domino et nostris huiusmodi immoverius Apostolicis firmiter obedire mandatis, Litteras Sanctissimi in Christo Patris et Domini nostri Domini Pauli divina providentia Papae tertii eius vera bulla plumbea ad cordulam canapis impendente munitas sanas quidem, et integras, non vitiatas, non cancellatas, neque in aliqua earum parte suspectas, sed omni prorsus vitio et suspitione carentes nobis per magnificam Comitissam Dominam Lucretiam Lodronam [85<sup>v</sup>] gubernatricem Societatis virginum sub invocatione Sanctae Ursulae Brixiensis, coram notario publico et testibus praesentatas, nos, cum ea qua decuit reverentia, recepimus huiusmodi sub tenore:

[segue il Mandato esecutoriale «Hodie a nobis», cfr. D19]

Post quarum quidem Litterarum Apostolicarum praesentationem et receptionem nobis, et per nos, ut premittitur, factas, fuimus per antedictam Magnificam Dominam Lucretiam principalem gubernatricem debita cum instantia requisiti, quatenus ad earundem Litterarum Apostolicarum et contentorum in eis executionem procedere dignaremur iuxta traditam seu directam per eas a Sede Apostolica nobis formam.

Nos igitur Aurelius Archidiaconus, commissarius et executor praefatus, attendentes requisitionem huiusmodi fore iustam, et rationi consonam, volentesque mandatum apostolicum nobis in hac parte directum reverenter exequi ut tenemur. Idcirco, auctoritate apostolica nobis ut praefertur commissa, et qua fungimur [88] in hac parte, easdem praeinsertas Litteras Apostolicas ac omnia et singula in eis contenta, vobis omnibus et singulis supradictis, quibus praesens noster processus dirigitur, et cuilibet vestrum insolidum intimamus, insinuamus et notificamus, ac ad vestrum et cuiuslibet vestrum notitiam deducimus, et deduci volumus per praesentes, vosque nihilominus et vestrum quemlibet eadem auctoritate tenore praesentium requirimus, et monemus pro primo, secundo, tertio, et peremptorie ac vobis, et vestrum cuilibet insolidum, in virtute sanctae obedientiae et sub infrascriptis sententiarum et censurarum poenis districte precipiendo mandamus, quatenus post praesentium vobis, seu alteri vestrum factam praesentationem seu notificationem, immediate, et postquam pro parte dictae magnificae comitissae Dominae Lucretiae gubernatricis, seu gubernatorum et gubernatricum, vel alterius eorum nunc et per tempora existentium fueritis moniti vel requisiti, non audeatis vel praesumatis, et quilibet vestrum audeat vel praesumat quicquam contra formam dictarum litterarum innovare, seu quomodolibet attemptare, sed potius innovata et attemptata (si quae forsan essent) revocare.

Monemus insuper, modo et forma praemissis, vos omnes et singulos supradictos, ac alios tam ecclesiasticos quam seculares cuiuscumque dignitatis, status, gradus, ordinis, vel condictionis existant, vobisque et ipsis expresse inhibentes ne dictae magnificae dominae comitissae gubernatrici, seu gubernatoribus et gubernatricibus, nec non dictae societati virginum Sanctae Ursulae Brixiensi, vel [89<sup>r</sup>] alicui earum nunc et pro tempore existentibus, quominus ipsi, et eorum singuli et singulae, privilegio et beneficio dictarum litterarum uti, frui et gaudere possint, et valeant, seu quominus omnia et singula praedicta suum debitum sortiantur effectum, impedimentum aliquod praestetis, seu praestent, aut impedientibus ipsis in praemissis gubernatrices et gubernatores ipsos, vel dictam Societatem in genere vel in specie, seu aliquid contra formam dictarum litterarum innovare volentibus detis, seu dent auxilium, consilium, vel favorem publice vel occulte, directe vel indirecte, quovis quesito colore; alioquin in vos omnes et singulos supradictos, et eos, ac vestrum et eorum quemlibet et generaliter in contradictores quoslibet, et rebelles in hac parte, nisi receptis per eos praesentibus, aut eorum alteri quomodolibet notificatis a contradictione, impedimento, auxilio, consilio, vel favore huiusmodi destiteritis, destiterint, sive destiterit, ac mandatis et monitionibus nostris huiusmodi, immoverius apostolicis parueritis, seu paruerint realiter, et cum effectu, ex nunc pro ut ex tunc praemissis tribus diebus pro omni canonica monitione excommunicationis. In capitula vero conventus, et collegia quaecumque, in his forsan delinquentia suspensionis a divinis, et in ipsos delinquentium et rebellium, ecclesias, monasteria seu capellas interdicti ecclesiastici sententias ferimus in his scriptis, et etiam promulgamus.

Vobis vero Reverendissimo in Christo patri et domino, domino Episcopo Brixiensi [89<sup>v</sup>] dumtaxat excepto, cui ob reverentiam vestrae pontificalis dignitatis deferimus in hac parte; si contra praemissa, vel ipsorum aliquod feceritis, seu fieri mandaveritis, per vos vel submissas personas, publice vel occulte, directe vel indirecte, quovis quesito colore, ex nunc prout ex tunc, praedicta trium dierum canonica monitione praemissa, ingressum ecclesiae interdicimus in his scriptis. Si vero huiusmodi interdictum per alios tres dies, ultra praefatos tres immediate sequentes sustinueritis, vos in eisdem scriptis simili canonica monitione praemissa, suspendimus a divinis. Verum, si praefatas interdicti et suspensionis sententias per alios duodecim dies ultra praefatos tres proxime dictos, immediate sequentes animo quod [lacuna]<sup>1</sup> sustinueritis indurato, vos ex nunc pro ut ex tunc, et e converso, huiusmodi canonica monitione praemissa, in his scriptis excommunicationis sententia auc-

toritate apostolica supradicta innodamus.

Ceterum cum ad executionem praemissorum ulterius faciendam nequeamus, quoad praesens personaliter interesse pluribus aliis arduis legitime impediti negotiis, universis et singulis dominis Abbatibus, Prioribus, Praepositis, Decanis, Archidiaconis, Cantoribus, Succintoribus, Sacristis, Scholasticis tam cathedralium etiam metropolitanarum Canonicis, parochialiumque ecclesiarum Rectoribus, et eorum loca tenentibus eorundem plebanis, viceplebanis, capellanis, curatis, vicariis perpetuis, archipresbiteris, altaristis, presbiteris, clericis [90<sup>r</sup>] notariis et tabellionibus publicis quibuscunque, per civitatem et dioecesim Brixiensem, ac alias ubilibet constitutis, et eorum cuilibet insolidum super ulteriori executione dicti mandati apostolici atque nostri facienda auctoritate apostolica supradicta tenore praesentium plenarie comittimus vices nostras, donec eas ad nos specialiter et expresse duxerimus revocandas; quos nos etiam, et eorum quemlibet eadem auctoritate et tenore requirimus, et monemus primo, secundo, tertio et perhemptorie comuniter et divisim, eisque nihilominus, et eorum cuilibet insolidum in virtute sanctae obedientiae, et sub excomunicationis poena quam in eos, et eorum quemlibet nisi fecerint quae mandamus, ferimus in his scriptis districte precipiendo mandantes quatenus infra tres dies continuos post praesentationem seu notificationem praesentium, aut requisitionem pro parte supradictae magnificae dominae gubernatricis, seu gubernatorum et gubernatricum, vel dictae Societatis in genere vel in spetie, nunc et pro tempore existentium, eis seu eorum alteri factam super hoc immediate sequentes, quos dies ipsis, et eorum cuilibet pro omni monitione terminoque perhemptorio assignamus, ita tamen quod in his exequendis unus vestrum alterum non expectet, nec unus pro alio, seu per alium se excuset, ad vos omnes et singulos supradictos personasque, et loca alia, de quibus, ac ubi, quando et quotiens expedierit personaliter accedant, seu accedat, et praefatas litteras apostolicas [90<sup>v</sup>] huncque nostrum processum et omnia et singula in eis contenta, seu earum substantialem effectum, vobis omnibus et singulis supradictis comuniter vel divisim legant, intiment, insinuent, et fideliter publicare procurent, ac eandem Comitissam gubernatricem, seu gubernatores et gubernatrices, ac dictam Societatem in genere vel in specie, nunc, et pro tempore existentes antedictos, ut ipsi omnes et singuli ac singulae, beneficio et commodo dicta-

Nell'atto del notaio Trappa si legge «absit» (ASB, Fondo notarile, notaio G.B. Trappa, filza 1770).

rum litterarum apostolicarum quiete et pacifice potiantur, fruantur et gaudeant, tueantur et deffendant, amotis exinde quibuslibet illicitis attemptatoribus, quos nos etiam ut supra amovemus, et denuntiamus amotos, non obstantibus omnibus quae praelibatus Sanctissimus Dominus noster Papa voluit non obstare in praeinsertis Litteris suis; et generaliter dicti subdelegati nostri omnia alia et singula nobis in hac parte commissa plenarie exequantur iuxta ipsarum litterarum apostolicarum, et praesentis nostri processus vim continentiam et tenorem; ita tamen quod ipsi, vel quicunque alius, seu alii quicunque contra formam dictarum litterarum non valeant, quomodolibet attemptare in praemissis, neque in processibus per nos habitis, aut sententiis per nos latis absolvendo vel suspendendo, aliud innovare.

In ceteris autem quae dictis gubernatoribus et gubernatricibus vel dictae Societati, et earum singulis in genere vel in specie nocere possent, seu quomodolibet obesse praefatis subdelegatis nostris, et quibuscunque potestatem omnimodam denegamus. Et si [91<sup>r</sup>] contingat vos super praemissis in aliquo procedere, de quo nobis potestatem omnimodam reservamus, non intendimus propterea comissionem nostram huiusmodi in aliquo revocare, nisi de revocatione ipsa specialem et expressam fecerimus mentionem.

Per processum autem nostrum huiusmodi nolumus, nec intendimus nostris in aliquo praeiudicare collegis, quominus ipsi, vel eorum alter, servato tamen hoc nostro processu, in huiusmodi negotio procedere valeant, prout eis, vel eorum alteri visum fuerit expedire, praefatas quoque Litteras Apostolicas et hunc nostrum processum, ac omnia et singula huiusmodi negotium tangentia, volumus penes dictos gubernatores et gubernatrices remanere, et non per vos, aut aliquem vestrum, seu quemcunque alium ipsis invitis, et contra eorum expressam voluntatem quomodolibet detineri, contrarium vero facientes praefatis nostris sententiis, prout in his scriptis latae sunt, ipso facto volumus subiacere.

Mandantes tamen copiam fieri de praemissis eam petentibus et habere debentes, petentium quidem sumptibus et expensis, absolutionem vero omnium et singulorum qui praefatas nostras excomunicationis sententias, aut earum aliquam incurrerint sive incurrerit quoquomodo nobis vel superiori nostro tantummodo reservamus.

In quorum omnium et singulorum fidem et testimonium praemissorum praesentes litteras sive praesens publicum instrumentum, processum nostrum huiusmodi in se continentes, sive continens exinde fieri, et per me Joannem Baptistam Trappam notarium et scribam infrascriptum [91<sup>v</sup>] subscribi, et publicari mandavimus, sigillique nostri iussimus et fecimus appensione communiri.

Datum et actum Brixiae in domibus solitae nostrae residentiae sitis in contrata Mercati Novi, anno nativitatis Dominicae, millesimo quingentesimo quadragesimo sexto, indictione quarta, die quarto decimo mensis Aprilis, Pontificatus Sanctissimi in Christo patris et domini, Domini Pauli divina providentia PP. tertii anno duodecimo.

Praesentibus Reverendo domino Augustino de Gentilibus, canonico ecclesiae maioris Brixiae, et domino presbytero Francisco de Berris capellano eiusdem ecclesiae testibus ad praemissa vocatis et specialiter rogatis. Approbo ego Joannes Baptista Trappa notarius infrascriptus.

Ego Joannes Baptista Trappa civis et habitator Brixiae publicus apostolica aucto-

ritate notarius et in huiusmodi negotio scriba electus, quia praeinsertarum litterarum apostolicarum praesentationi receptioni requisitioni processuumque et sententiarum fulminationi decreto et subdelegationi, omnibusque et singulis aliis praemissis, una cum praenominatis testibus praesens fui, eaque sic fieri vidi et audivi ac in notam sumpsi. Ideo praesentes litteras sive praesens publicum processus instrumentum exinde confeci, signoque et nomine meis consuetis signavi in fidem et testimonium rogatus et requisitus, una cum praefati Reverendi Domini executoris sigilli appensione.

A tergo suprascripti processus instrumenti reperitur infrascripta eiusdem Intimatio et depositio:

In nomine Domini. Amen. Cunctis pateat evidenter, et sit notum, quod anno Nativitatis Dominicae millesimo quingentesimo quadragesimo sexto indictione quarta, [92<sup>r</sup>], die vero vigesimo nono mensis Aprilis. Ego Joannes Baptista Trappa notarius retroscriptus et infrascriptus, requisitus pro parte retroscriptae magnificae comitissae dominae Lucretiae Lodronae, habens, et in meis propriis manibus tenens, copiam retroscriptarum litterarum per me ex meo originali extractam et concordantem, ipsam, ac omnia et singula in eisdem litteris contenta, in Christo patri et domino Joanni Petro Ferreto, Dei et apostolicae Sedis gratia episcopo Milenensi, in episcopatu Brixiensi suffraganeo et vicario generali existenti et personaliter reperto in Capella solitae audientiae in episcopali Palatio Brixiae intimavi, insinuavi et notificavi, ac ad eius notitiam deduxi, et deductam esse volui. Et in signum verae et realis intimationis et notificationis, ipsam copiam eidem recipienti tradidi. Praesentibus ad praemissa Joanne Baptista Urgnano et Georgio etiam de Urgnanis, civibus et habitatoribus Brixiae testibus vocatis et rogatis.

De quibus omnibus rogatus sum ego Joannes Baptista Trappa notarius infra-

scriptus, publicum conficere Instrumentum.

Ego Joannes Baptista Trappa, civis et habitator Brixiae, publicus Apostolica auctoritate notarius, quia de praemissa exequtione rogatus fui. Ideo hoc publicum instrumentum exinde confeci meque subscripsi mea solita attestatione apposita.

Ego Dominicus Rizzinus quondam domini Gasparis de Gardono Riperiae incola Brixiae, publicus Veneta auctoritate notarius, praesentis processus Instrumentum ex autentico, sigilli appensione ad cordulam rubei coloris munito, in membrana scriptis exarato per dominum Joannem Baptistam Trappam notarium Brixiae, vita functum, fideliter transumptavi et [92<sup>v</sup>] exemplavi, et cum eodem autentico in Archivio Venerandae Societatis Sanctae Ursulae Brixiae existenti collationavi; et quia concordare inveni, propterea in fidem et testimonium mei tabellionatus signo apposito me subscripsi hac die undecima mensis Martii anno 1638.

### 21. Autenticazione della trascrizione della Bolla

Brescia, Archivio Vescovile, sez. Religiosi, busta 27, fasc. 2. 11 agosto 1570. Inedito.

Privilegia Virginum

In Christi nomine Amen. Nos, Ludovicus Arrivabenus, juris utriusque doctor, Archipresbyter plebis collegiatae Divi Antonii de Caneto et in episcopatu Brixien. locumtenens et Vicarius generalis Reverendissimi in Christo patris domini Dominici Bollani, Dei et Apostolicae Sedis gratia episcopi Brixiensis etc. Universis et singulis Christifidelibus presertim per civitatem et dioecesim Brixiensem, ac alias ubilibet constitutis, praesentibus et futuris, ad quos praesentes nostrae litterae pervenerint, salutem in Domino.

Cum indubitata noticia subscriptorum noveritis quod litteras felicis memoriae Pauli papae tertii eius vera bulla cum cordulis canipis, more Romanae Curiae plumbo impendenti bullatas, sanas et integras, non vitiatas, non cancellatas nec in aliqua earum parte suspectas, sed omni prorsus vitio et suspitione carentes, nobis per nobilem dominam Veronicam de Buciis Brixiensem praesentatas, cum ea qua decet reverentia recepimus huiusmodi sub tenore, videlicet:

[segue il Mandato esecutoriale «Hodie a nobis», cfr. D19]

Et quia easdem litteras apostolicas sic, ut praemittitur, nobis praesentatas, et per nos visas et diligenter inspectas, sanas et integras, ac omni prorsus vitio et suspectione carentes invenimus, idcirco praefatae nobilis dominae Veronicae licitis peticionibus annuentes, ipsas praesentibus de verbo ad verbum, nil addendo, muttando, vel diminuendo inseri fecimus et testimonium visionis huius, ac omnium praemissorum, eidem praesentes dedimus litteras, sigilli praedicti reverendissimi domini Episcopi Brixiae impressione munitas <sup>1</sup>.

Datum et actum in episcopali auditorio Brixiae, anno a nativitate Domini millesimo quingentesimo septuagesimo, Indictione tertia decima, die undecimo Augusti. Praesentibus D. Hieronimo Mainacia et D. Julio Aquila notariis Curiae Episcopalis

Brixiae. Testibus idoneis, rogatis et vocatis.

Ego Vicentius, filius domini Bernardini de Scalvinis, notarius collegiatus Brixiensis et Curiae episcopalis Brixiae cancellarius, quoniam supradictarum litterarum praesentacioni et requisitioni, ut supra factis, interfui, litterasque apostolicas praefatas de mandato praedicti reverendi domini Vicarii ut supra insertas, ab originali transcripsi, et ad praemissorum omnium fidem et testimonium cum solito signo tabellionatus mei subscripsi <sup>2</sup>, et sigilli praedictae Curiae impressione munivi, rogatus et requisitus.

#### Communitas et Consiliarii Civitatis Brixiae

Universis et singulis praesentes inspecturis attestamur suprascriptum ser Vincentium esse probum et legalem notarium ac de honorando collegio dominorum nota-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Nel margine sinistro, sigillo del vescovo Bollani, carta su cera da negativo metallico.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Nel margine sinistro, tabellionato di Vincenzo Scalvini.

riorum Brixiae, nec non et cancellarium Curiae episcopalis huius civitatis, cuius instrumentis et scripturis publicis et autenticis plena per nos fides adhibetur et ubique locorum est merito adhibenda. In quorum fidem et cetera.

Brixiae, die 12 Augusti 1570.

Marius Trussius

Communis et populi Brixiae cancellarius scripsit et sigillavit

[L.S.]  $^3$ .

# 22. Epistola confortatoria

Città del Vaticano, Archivio Segreto Vaticano, S.C.Rit. Processus 341, ff. 958v-969r.

Epistola confortatoria alle vergini della Compagnia di sant'Orsola composta per il suo cancelgliere Gabriello Cozzano.

Aldito io ho, o sacre sorelle (sorelle per hora vi chiamo, perché seti figlie d'una commune matre), aldito io ho, dico, il vostro giusto dolore [959] che haveti preso per esser uscite alcune della Compagnia, cascando de così bel luogo a fozza di tante stelle dal cielo. Cresse il cordoglio vostro, non tanto per intender altre ancora, essendo attossichate nel precio di così eletta vita, già inchinarse a far il simile, quanto per temer che già altre non l'habbien lasciata, almancho con la voluntade, prontissime a salirne fuora ogni volta che l'el potesseno fare con suo honore o commoditade. Prociede ancor più oltra il vostro ramarico per temer fortamente che, per tal pestilentia di essempii, altre debole non se affredisseno nell'amore et fede de sta sì grande vocation celeste.

Queste vostre doglie son doglie giustissime, degne de spiriti veramente virginei et generosi. Qual già mai animo più verace, più signorile po esser, che il dolorarse et pianger la perzeda delle sorelle? Et cruciarse del ardore del zelo del honor de Dio, essendo de qui fortamente violato? Perché mentre che questa Compagnia è del suo diletto unigenito figlio Iesu Christo (come chiarissimamente ha testificato la fondatrice fidel ministra del voler suo), et volendo che per riverentia di esso suo Figlio la sia honorata, se venne a levargli il precio per così fatte vie, specialmente uscendone per gir nelli monasterii. Opera certamente nata da invidia diabolica, che quello che adesso Dio voglia esser in specialitade appreciato se consenta et se sforze a far il contrario. Sicché, venerabile sorelle, mentre che in voi così doppie facelle d'amore ardeno, una del zelo dell'honor del Figliol de Dio, l'altra per la tristezza del danno delle sorelle, doppia corona di gloria in Ciel et terra vi aquistate.

[959<sup>v</sup>] Ma la vostra doglia par che me costrenza che io vi scrive qualche cosa consolatoria, et la quale non solamente mitige questi nostri giusti affanni, ma ancora li cangie in mazzor allegrezza.

Quatro cose, adoncha, brevamente se diran, non originalmente cavate da mio capo (taccia qui la temeritade, et almancho sospenda il giudicio in quello che non sa di certo), ma fondate nelli sacri sensi della matre nostra. Ben in una cosa di certo as-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Sigillo del Comune di Brescia, «Communitas Brixiae», carta su cera.

sai mancharò: che, ciò che dirò, un'ombra sarà a rispetto di quello che è in veritade

et che da più felice lingua dir se potrìa.

In la prima parte adoncha se consolaran i vostri dolori. L'altra pertinerà a stabilir quelle che son debole. La terza raccoglierà le smarite. L'ultima temerà cose spaventevole sopra le deliberate de uscirne overo già uscite.

Primieramente adoncha a voi me volte, o voi che seti prudente et salde, stabilite a fozza di torre inespugnabile, perché seti fondate non sull'arena, ma nella pietra viva et ferma. A voi, dico, me volto, che tanto per ciò ve dolevati; poneti hormai fin ai vostri affanni. Ecco che vi son offerti dal Ciel novi conforti. Drizzate li cori, alzate con forte fede le menti vostre a Dio. Et ivi repossiative nella sua confortatoria luce che'l ne sporge, a tal fozza, havendo egli dal principio nell'eternitade sua, et in se stesso, cognosciuto questa Compagnia con la sua fondatrice, et havendola amata di amor eterno avanti che 'l la piantasse qui nel mondo, et parimente havendo nel eterno suo consiglio orde[960<sup>r</sup>]nato quel numero et quella certa moltitudine de vergine di sta sua congregatione, ch'egli vol glorificare nel suo regno, nesuna mai potrà manchare al legitimo numero, che allui sarà piacciuto che sia.

Imperoché tanto sarà possibile né despiantarla, né che ancor una minima manche al numero che vol Dio che sia, quanto è possibile che Dio manche et se destrugga. Percioché l'era avanti che la fosse, et già è compiuta et perfetta avanti che la se compisca. Et chi vorà esser causa che la manche et se destrugga, non per questo ella mancharà; ma ben quelle persone che ne voran esser causa, lor saran quelle che mancharanno et saran destrutte, sicome accade a chi patissen la vertigine, se pensan che tutte le cose vaden sotto sopra; ma lor son quelle. Percioché quel che Dio ha ordenato, nessuna possanza lo po roinare. Perché chi po esser mazzore o equale a Dio?

Siché qui non habiamo a tristarse de perzeda alcuna, che se possia fare, perché la non è in veritade, ancorchel pare che la sia. Imperoché quelle che han abbandonata questa nostra celeste regola o sono per lassarla, o che eran false et hipocrite; et così que danno se è fatto havendo perso cose non vere, ma false et simulate? Overo che se hanno lassate venzer et ingannare dal errore et falsi consiglii, et così stoltamente sono caddute a fozza di tante stelle.

Qui ben vero è che la lege della caritade dee costrenzer a pigliar grave dolore di tal caddimento, altramente se sarebber peggiori che fiere. Perché ancor David pianse Absalon; pianse ancor Iesu Christo Giuda et la città di Gierusalem.

Ma tal [960°] dolor dee ancor pigliar consolatione. In allegrezza nova se dee voltare, perché Dio, appresso del quale (come se ha ancor detto) mai sarà possibil sminuire il numero certo de sta sua Compagnia, in loco di quelle che lor se haveran fatte indegne di tal corona di gloria, ne chiamarà delle altre a intrarce, che pigliaran la lor girlanda, sicomo ancor in loco di Giuda successe un altro che pigliò la lui gloria, che per so manchamento haveva persa. Et quelle che Dio farà venire in pe delle perse, saranno molte più gentili, saggie et sante che non sarian state le uscite. Quella è di ciò gran prova, che le prime son state pazze a perder simil ventura, et queste altre saran prudente a cognosserla et abbrazzarla. Siché tal perzeda ne sarà causa di mazzor aquisto. Et al fin vederemo, per nostro mazzor giubilo et gloria, tale adversitade esser intravenute, et il nemigo haverne giovato nella sua malignitade. Et l'honor del Figliol de Dio, che qui parea già infoschirse, con mazzor luce di gloria levandose, mirabilmente risplenderà.

Né questa consolatione dovemo pigliare tanto per le già uscite, quanto per quelle che sono ancor per uscirne, purché usciscan senza nostra causa, né al dì del giudicio se possian lamentare, che non se gli sia usato ciò che ricerca la carita[961']de accioché non caschassen da tanta gloria. Poi, quando se gli haverà fatto quel che se po, se n'abbandonaran, che cosa se harà altro da fare se non concordarse con san Giovan evangelista, dicendo: «Ex nobis exierunt sed non erant ex nobis»? cioè: de noi sono usciti, ma non eran de noi. Perché, se fussen state delle nostre, mai in eterno sarian uscite. Vadessen adoncha, sicome stolte vane et false, et dien logo alle prudente et vere; et (come dice la Scrittura) non impazzen lì dove altre habbian a far frutto.

Et così il nemigo rimanga scornato, che, pensando di nocer, ne giove, et commincie a sapere adesso almancho (purché 'l voglia intenderla) non esser prudentia, non astutia che possia un quancho contra la sapientia di Dio, il qual sa gli tradimenti et inganni di suoi nemici voltarli in sua mazzor gloria; et fa che con la stessa propria astutia lor stessi ingannati se ritroveno; et le lor forze, et la stessa sua spada sia quella che li occida.

Siché qui sarà causa treppia di mazzor allegrezza nostra. Primo, se refarà la roina data. Dapoi, mazzor sarà l'aquisto che non fo il danno. Finalmente, darase causa di nova allegrezza nella nova ammiratione della sapientia divina. Il qual fa (come dice ancor la Scrittura) che li proprii inganni del nemico sian quelli che ne dien la vittoria.

Grande giubilo, adoncha, è in considerare sto modo di venzer et in amazzar il nemigo, non adoperare altro che esso nemigo. O que bella delettatione è a veder questo, et adesso in parte, et sarà in Ciel plenariamente et in perpetuo.

[961<sup>v</sup>] Non parlo poi de quel altro vostro giovamento, grandissimo al parer mio, che il cascar delle altre è causa del vostro maggior stabilimento, e causa che maggior guardia habbiate sopra de voi, et che più fortamente ve strengiate alli piedi di Iesu Christo, del unico Amadore della Madre nostra, suo et vostro, et di qualunche amarà lei, iuxta illud: «Ipse pater amat vos quia vos me amatis». Chel ve conserve, chel ne conforte, et ne faccia stabili in eterno. Imperoché quello che a una è caschato, a tutte pono intravenire.

Quella adoncha in noi debolezza o inchinatione di caschar nel stesso errore, l'altrui fallo ancor fa che sia emendata et fortificata. Onde dice un scrittore: «Dall'altrui fallo il savio emenda il suo». Così il caschar di Giuda fo et è fortissimo amaestramento ad altri di non far il simile. Così li angeli in Cielo non prima furon stabiliti, chel diavolo fusse caschato con gran stramazzo. Che quanto fo il suo caddimento più grave, tanto fo la lor vita più stabile.

Onde pare che di necessitade sia che, per la salute di boni, cosifatti scandali vengan. Però se dice: Abel non sarìa se Cain stato non fusse. Nanche tanta gloria de martiri et altri santi nella Giesa risplenderìa, se li gravi contrasti et gran scandali del mondo et dal diavol non fussen intravenuti.

Però dice la Veritade: «Necesse est ut veniant scandala, sed vae homini illi, per quem venerint», ciò è: di neces[962<sup>r</sup>]sitade è che vengan delli scandali (ciò è discordie, heresie, et altre male semenze et cativi essempii), ma guai a quella persona per causa della quale i veneranno. Et san Paolo dice: «Necesse est ut veniant haereses», ciò è: di necessitade è che vengan delle heresie. Se adoncha l'è di necessitade che vengano delli errori, delli scandali, delle heresie, certo questo non è per altro se non perché i boni non sarian boni se per così fatte vie da Dio non fussen probati, purga-

ti et stabiliti. Perché (come dice sant'Agostino) Dio bono mai lassaria venir di mali,

se da quelli non ne cavasse meglior bene.

Qui adonca, o venerabil sorelle, respirete; respirete, dico, et confortative. Et fati che l'altrui pazzia sia causa a voi di mazzor prudentia et di più saldo stabilimento di voluntade, sia causa de ligar più saldamente il cor vostro con Dio, accioché così et la vertù vostra più se inforcisca, et l'honor del Sposo vostro celeste più risplenda in voi. Perché quanto più voi sarete honorate per le vostre bone opere et vertude, tanto più ancor il Figliol de Dio sarà honorato in voi.

Che debbo io poi dire di quell'altra sorte di allegrezza che de qui vi nascerà per tutto il paradiso, et adesso la speranza di ciò vi dee produre nel cor indicibil gaudio? Que gloria, que contentezza sarà quella, quando da Dio, dalla Madonna, da tutta la corte celestiale sareti honorate et laudate, di quello che sareti state constante fra li cativi essempii. Ecco, se dirà in quella luminosa patria, quelle, che nelle tentationi sono state stabile, ancorché altre uscivan, ancorché persone nobile et grave et di fede, fuor di proposito dicevan poterse viver [962] et meglio servire a Dio ancor altrove, ancor uscendo della propria vocatione celeste, tutta via son state salde nella regola sua, han servata la fede. O giovane generose et prudente, veramente degne della sua promessa corona.

Et così voi andareti triomfando per el Ciel, lodate d'ognintorno. Imperoché la sol perseverantia merita la girlanda. Siché consolative, pigliate ristoro, animative in cosifatte consideratione, imperoché la sete vostra giusta del honor de Dio et del precio della Compagnia vi sarà scodesta abondantissimamente in Ciel et terra, secondo il detto evangelico: «Beati qui esuriunt et sitiunt iustitiam quoniam saturabuntur», ciò è: beati son quelli che han fame et han sete della giusticia perché la gli sarà sco-

desta.

Ma questo baste per hora per consolare. Dirò mi ancor insiema con voi, che seti stabile et valente cavagliere, benché altri conforti in voi il Spirito Santo dee produre.

Hor perché, secondo il precetto dello Apostolo, le persone inferme nella fede non se deno sprezzare, ma ricevere, ma abbrazzare con piazzevol et dolce spirito, per questo adesso drizzo il parlar nostro a quelle sorelle che son debole, et che di facil, se no le fussen animate, visitate, agiutate, se lassarian levar o a gire a più bassa vita, o a ritornar al mondo. Et questo o per il puoco precio della regola, o per la disconfidanza de esser soccorse nelli lor bisogni et esser abbandonate, o per la pocha fede di poterse conservare, stando così in tal sorte di viver; como che Dio, che agiuta ognuno che se [963<sup>r</sup>] dà allui, poi non sia per soccorrere a quelle che gli offerisse la honestade et esso suo primo virgineo fiore.

Queste sorelle aldeno di gratia, aldeno, dico, la gran ventura sua alla quale Dio le ha invitate, et la gran perzeda se non saranno accorte a intenderla. Quante gran signore saranno, che felice se reputarian a ritrovarse esser state una ancor fantescha de una de quelle che veramente et saldamente haran perseverato in sta divina Com-

pagnia!

Primamente, Dio egli ha inspirata et insieme constretta la matre nostra fondatrice a piantare et fondare nel nome suo questa sacra regola di vita. Intanto questo è verissimo: che ella la chiamava Compagnia non sua, ma di Iesu Christo. Et se gli adoperava cerca, non sicome patrona, ma sicome ministra.

Et benché la ge fusse stata fin da piccola inspirata, et divinamente dimostrata et posta in grandissimo desiderio, tutta via mai l'ha volesta principiare finché è stata

commandata da Iesu Christo, finché egli gli ha gridato nel core et l'ha spenta et constretta a comminciarla, et fondarla. Accioché mai se potesse dire da creatura alcuna, né in Ciel né in terra, che lei del suo, sicome suo, ge havesse dentro nanche una minima particella, ma tutta dependesse dal puro consiglio del Spiritu Santo in Christo Iesu, unigenito figlio del Padre eterno et della gloriosa Vergine Maria.

O divinissima regola et puramente celeste. Era de bisogno, certamente, de vertù sì potente et forte, in questa età ferrea, per seminar piante de virginitade sparse per

le spine del mondo.

Que adoncha bellezza [963<sup>v</sup>] di vita, que honor de professione è a esser una di quello numero che Dio egli a special fozza ha eletto! Esser una di quella Compagnia, che per un certo privilegio proprio è detta Compagnia del Figliol di Dio. O nova felicitade, o ventura oltra tutte le venture, se cognosciuta sarà! Certissimamente la più bella gratia che adesso Dio possia fare a persona alcuna è il cognosser il precio di questa vita, di questo novo suo thesoro, novo et antiquo, al mondo mostrato nelli ultimi tempi guasti da tanta corrottela de vitii et da tante quasi infinite heresie.

Dio non fa niente indarno, nanche mai innova cosa alcuna, se non nelle estremitade di bisogni. Se l'havesse cognosciuto molti che se han da salvare, altrove poterse, o meglio, o così bene, o anche del tutto salvare, mai non harìa questa altra luce di vita nel mondo novamente accesa.

O, gridava quel vivo desiderio che puramente procedeva dal Spirito Santo nella matre nostra, gridava, dico, quel Spirito affochato: piacesse a Dio che tutto il mondo venesse sotto l'ombra de sta regola. Puro era quel desiderio, netto da ogni affettione humana. Adoncha non poteva esser se non fatto in veritade. Il che essendo così, che cosa altro se po concludere se non questa vita esser il più eletto et preci-

puo lume di viver che esser possia?

Siché, o Vergini, mirate il gran dono che Dio da l'alto Cielo ve ha porgesto in questi ultimi bisognosi tempi. Che ben quelle de voi sarebbeno meschinissime, le quali invitate da Dio, non accettassen un tal et tanto presento; et accet[964<sup>r</sup>]tandol nol conservasseno fin alla morte. Imperoché chi uscisse fuor del invito divino, uscisse fuor di esso Dio. Chi uscisse fuor di Dio, in eterno perisse. Qui nesuna persona se inganne, che poi sta veritade al fin se manifestarà. Se Dio vol una cosa, perché ne volemo noi un altra? Se Dio ne chiama a honorare sta sua sacra Compagnia, perché noi havemo ardire a dishonerarla? Siché, sorelle, siete accorte, temete, state salde et constante perseverando fin alla fine, accioché non caschate da tanta gloria di vita in profondissima miseria.

Hor, se altro non ce movesse, non doveria forse indure ogni cor ancora di ferro a bramar sta vita, questo così signorile et bello nome, che è Compagnia di sant'Orsola? Et quale più degna congregatione ritrovaremo giamai di quella di sant'Orsola? Grande di numero, regal de dignitade, trionfante de vittoria, potente de meriti, et divina de honori. Così è et sarà questa nostra, almancho interiormente. Talmente gloriose deventeranno quelle che fidele saranno, sforzandose di far qui quello che la fondatrice harà ordenato.

Imperoché creda, creda ognun, che crederà il vero, che questo haverla nominata Compagnia di sant'Orsola non è stato fatto così di caso; nanche per innobelirla col solo nome, como se fa homanamente che se metten nomi (come piace) gravi et di gran Santi o per ornamento della persona, o per devotione, o per [964<sup>v</sup>] speranza et desiderio che così quel figlio debba cresser in vertù et debba imitar quel santo, il

nome del qual gli è stato messo, o per tutte queste cose insiema, o altri ancor simili modi.

Non dico a cosifatte fozze se è chiamata questa Compagnia. Ma questo nome è venuto dal Cielo, in forza et possanza del Spirito Santo è stato introdotto, nel qual se promette nova gratia del Altissimo a ognuna perseverante con fideltade in tal obedientia. Se promette quella vertù santifica, che ancor fo data a quelle undeci millia vergini che consentirono alla voluntade di sant'Orsola, anzi alla vocatione divina in lei, per la qual virtude vinseron se se stesse, et essa morte. Se promette una nova girlanda di gloria, perché anche nova fortezza di spirito è data. Intanto importa a consentir a voler esser di sto sacrato numero, et perseverarli fidelmente fin alla morte. Fidelmente, dico, in conservare quella nova pianta di spirito, che è dato da Dio per mezzo della sua, a chi veramente danno qui il suo libero consenso. Per il qual spirito frutifica la più bella vita che sia stata, né mai sarà. Credeti che queste non son favole, ma verità inviolabile.

Beate quelle che qui sinceramente daranno il suo nome, né se lassaran levare da tal fede di vita, né sequitaranno altri né riti né spiriti. Beate, dico, et più che beate, percioché in Cielo incoronate saranno de una nova et special corona non commune ad altre, che compararà per tutto il paradiso, et della quale tutta [965<sup>r</sup>] la celestial corte mirandola se ne stupirà. Ecco, se dirà, que nova girlanda! Que bella gioia! Ecco que honor, que gratia di valore reluce in quel glorioso numero! Queste son quelle che fra tante spine de perverse openioni se son servate integre. Tra tanti mali di heresie et de cativi essempii son state fidele, et stando nel mondo, stando fra li demonii, han servata la fede, non han renegato il nome mio, né han lassate le vie mie monstrategli per l'amica mia. Cosifatte, et altre ancor più belle parole che dir non se pono, a fozze mirabile saran dette de voi in quella superna patria con tanta festa et trionfo, che se pur nanche la milesima parte de quei solazzi et gaudii descendesse nel inferno, tutte le pene de dannati se indolcirebeno.

State adoncha ferme et con baldezza, accioché altre non piglieno la così preciosa

corona vostra. Non vi lassate ingannare da baie et frappe del mondo.

Sicome se qualche una di quelle undeci millia vergini di sant'Orsola havesse abbandonata la compagnia sua dove era invitata, per andar altrove a servir a Dio, mai quella, stando in quella sua fantasia, sarebbe stata glorificata (perché Dio l'haveva eletta a honorarlo lì in tal compagnia, lì volendogli dare la corona di gloria). Sicché pur troppo mateschamente quella hareve fatto se, lasciata la via monstratagli da Dio, ella poi, levata da altri consiglii o proprie fantasie, ne ha[965] vesse sequitate altre. Onde in vece di mercede, havesse meritato l'ira eterna di Dio, come egli minaccia, dicendo: «Ipsi vero non cognoverunt vias meas, quibus juravi in ira mea, si introibunt in requiem meam», cioè: costoro non han volesto cognosser le vie mie, alli quali ho giurato nell'ira mia, se che mai intraranno nel mio riposo.

Le vie di Dio sono quelle che monstrano li suoi veraci ministri. Le vie de Dio al tempo di sant'Orsola eran esse voluntade di quella Santa. Al tempo di Moisè eran li andamenti di esso Moisè. Le vie de Dio alli tempi nostri sono li consiglii, la dottrina et essempii della fondatrice nostra. Sicome adoncha chi havesse sprezzati li consiglii et inviti di essa sant'Orsola, hareve despreciata la stessa voluntade di Dio, et così harìa meritata l'ira sua eterna, così intravenerà a quelle nostre, le quale per sequir altre vie abbandonaranno questo consiglio divino specialmente già admesso, et renonciaranno lo invito già accettato, la cui certezza già Dio gli habbia inspirata nel core, ma poi lor quel verbo habbian perso o per altri consiglii o per negligentia, o

per esser vente da qualche forte tentatione, o per altre fozze.

Que cosa altra, adoncha, se ha de temer sopra costoro, se non la spaventevole minaccia divina che io ho detto di sopra? Salvo se, pentute et recognossendo il suo misero fallo, non ritornassen con mazzor fervore, et più fidele et constante non diventasseno. Perché a chi se pen[966] te non basta esser come era di prima, ma bisogna più fortamente et più abbondamente operare, che non fava avanti. Percioché giusta cosa è che, chi ha fatto in male più che li altri, in bene faccia ancor più che li altri fanno.

Non dirò poi de quell'altra bella gratia, che a voi in specialitade è stata concessa da Dio: che, fra tanta moltitudine che poi intrarà, a voi per singular privilegio sia toccato esser le primitie del novo spirito de sta sacra Compagnia. O quel bel honore, que nova gloria (se la sarà intesa) esser elette da Dio per esser così il primo et fresco fiore de sto suo novo giardino! Non dee esser forse questa una allegrezza incomparabile? et tanto incomparabile quanto eterna? Mo, se altro non fusse, non se doverebbe più presto elezzer a morire mille fiade, che esser private de tanto et cosifatto honor di gloria? O qual pazzia sarà di quelle che se stesse se n'haran fatte indegne, et se haran lassato uscir delle mani un così novo et bel tesoro! Certamente li Cieli con tutti gli elementi se stupiranno sopra tal profonditade di mattezza di quelle sventurate creature.

Ma che bisogna contar queste laude, siccome le grandissime? Altre sono le eccellentie di sta cernita vita ancor più mirabile! Fra le quale una per hora ne dirò. Pregovi, ascoltatila con li cori attenti.

[966<sup>v</sup>] Quella sorte di vita che 'l Figliol di Dio ha portato dal sino del suo eterno Padre in terra, et egli l'ha vivesta, et li suoi Apostoli et tanti altri della primitiva Giesa. Questa tale per mezzo della sua fidel ancilla ha ripiantata adesso, cerca il fin del mondo, accioché il fin sia conforme col principio, et se congiunga a fozza di cercolo.

La Ecclesia ha incomminciato da virginitade et in virginitade ha da finire. Virginità, dico, che esteriormente viva secondo il commune costume giusto. Et così sia celeste de spirito, et sempre con Dio vada, che però anche, quanto sia possibile, se conforme, nella sua conversatione, alla laudabil commune usanza; che vada secondo la lege et li consiglii et costumi, così divini come humani, non oltra ciò fazzendo cosa alcuna, né in vestimenti, né in gesti o in altri alcuni atti, cosa singulare et fuor del commun costume, et che die causa al prossimo da dire et brontolare. Talmente scrive san Luca esser vivesti san Zacharia et santa Maria Elisabet: «ambo, dice, erant iusti ante Deum incedentes in omnibus mandatis et iustificationibus Domini sine querela». Cioè: eran tutti dui nel conspetto di Dio giusti, perché caminavan in tutti li commandamenti del Signore, et le giustificationi, cioè vie, et atti legali et cerimoniali, senza querela, senza dar da dir a nesuno et dar causa de admiratione alcuna nel so conversare. Talmente viveva la Madonna, san Gio[967<sup>r</sup>]sefo, santa Martha, et tanti altri così martiri come confessori, tante sante vedoe et virgine, santa Anna, santa Monica, santa Tecla, Cecilia, Agatha, santa Orsola et altre pur assai.

Stando nella vitta attiva eran nelli Cieli; et la contemplativa era nell'attiva, et l'attiva nella contemplativa. Mirabil sorte di vita! Così Dio dà la sua gratia alli tempi suoi, et come allui piace. Tal luce di vita, adesso, ha impiantata nel mondo per la sua santa sposa. Nelli monasterii non è sta dato né promesso sto dono soblime perché nanche era necessario, percioché Dio dà la gratia del suo Spirito secondo la necessitade delle imprese. Ma ben qui fu concesso, et è promesso a qualunche con-

sentirà a esser de sto aventurato numero. Mirate adoncha, o vergini, se haveti causa de star qui salde. Mirate, che non poteti se non cascar dal alto, andando altrove.

O se Dio revelasse pur la milesima parte del precio del splendor novo di questa via di vita, la inamorarebbe tutto il mondo, et faria che fin li sassi se stupissen di tal bellezza. O nova gratia, o gloria grande delli tempi nostri, nova fiamma di veritade! Felice che 'l saperà cognossere. Puochi ben saran quelli che tal gioia appreciarà, perché rari sono sempre a chi è dato il ver lume di sapere, specialmente in questo

corrottissimo tempo. Ma quelli pochissimi pur saran beatissimi.

Hor se quelle persone, alle quale (essendo poste fra [967<sup>v</sup>] tante corrottele et nove sette de vita sospetta) non è concessa tal gratia di luce, saran infelice, che è da dir de quelle che han consentuto a intrar nella via di cognosserla, ma poi se son revoltate in drieto a non volerla più? che di quelle che di chiaro l'han cognosciuta et amata, et poi l'han lasciata? et renegata la via divina qui da Dio monstratagli, van sequitando altri costumi de viver col cor cieco? Percioché che ingiustamente abbandonan la luce del Spirito Santo datagli in una regola, et da una matre, giustamente saran cecati de essa luce di vita in un altra. Che han pigliate le primitie del Spirito in una Compagnia, non più in un altra le potran pigliare, perché do volte un non po esser fantolino, né nascer de due matri. Onde dice san Paolo a certi: Ancorché havesti mille maestri, non però poteti havere più d'un patre, che son io, che in Jesu Christo ci ho generati. Et Dio non è mutabile, che'l voglia hor in una via dar a una foggia il so spirito, hor in un altra via darlo all'altra fozza.

Grida san Paolo: state sicome seti chiamati. Et noi, poi, sotto apparentia di servir a Dio abbandonaremo Dio? Voremo che Dio serve a noi? Che cosa è altro far ste mutationi, se non cercar la quiete nelle proprie voglie? Se non nel proprio appetito voler far vita spirituale? et, cargati dal peso del proprio amore, sperar de intrare in

Cielo?

Se pur questo in alcune è errore di mente, et non più presto astucia di malitia, perché tal sorte per coprir meglio [968'] le sue vergogne dicon se esser inspirate da Dio, chiamando rabaldeschamente il suo mal desiderio inspiration celeste; et ad altre ancor mal ferme dicendol, le tiran per la distensione de tal peste di spirito a pigliar in se stesse cosifatte venerate semenze. Et se dispongono i sensi interiori a tramutarse in tale cativerie, perché sempre le cative openioni, sicome più conforme alla sensualità, più volentiera se riceveno nell'anima.

Siché le meschine così viveno sopra la terra, ree di tre sceleritade: una, del haver renegata la via della veritade; l'altra, della biastema perché chiama inspiration divina la propria voglia; la terza, per infettare ancor altre a tal pestilente essempio. Così han fatto et fanno di novo li novi heretici ribelli, et essortan ancor altri a farlo. Piglia, piglia (dicon) ardire de lassare sto peso di soggettione, se tu te senti poter far altrove meglior profetto, et viene alla libertà evangelica. Sotto cosifatte parole in apparentia bone, ma di dentro pessime et mortifere, inganano le infelici creature, et le tirano nel profondo del abisso.

Ma ritorniamo all'allegrezze del florido giardin nostro, et cantiamo quì anchor al-

mancho una altra sua laude avanti che facciamo fine.

Tra le altre gratie, delle quale fiorisse questa casa di Dio, questa ne è una delle grandissime. Che qualunche veramente, et non con duplicità di core, intrarà in questa sacra militia, ecco Dio [968<sup>v</sup>] gli promette che mai gli mancharà nelli bisogni suoi. né spirituali, né corporali. Perché, qual vero et fidel capitaneo non provede alli suoi soldati delle sue conveniente pag[h]e, et di altre anco cose necessarie? Et poi

se harà ardir de dubitare che Dio egli sia per manchare in cosa alcuna a quelli che al soldo suo fidelmente saran intrati? Mai qui nanche pur nominata fusse questa infidelitade, ma tengase per cosa più che vera et certa, che mai fo, né sarà patre che con tanto amore abbrazzesse figlio suo diletto, con quanto il padre nostro celeste abbrazza specialmente le fidele de questa nova militia del suo diletto Figlio, anzi comparatione alcuna non po esser de amor di patre alcun creato all'amor di quello Patre eterno.

Però dice l'Evangelio: Se voi che seti cativi sapeti far del bene alli vostri figlii quanto più il Patre vostro celeste darà il spirito bono a chi gel chiederà. Et tanto più farà questo, quanto più se farà cosa che sia accetta alla sua voluntade. Et, fra le cose che hoggi di più gli aggradisca essendo l'honorare questa sacra del suo Figlio Compagnia, ecco che in specialitade vol favorezzare ch'intrando gli farà honore.

Mai quella persona sarà derelitta. Nelli bisogni corporali sarà la conveniente provisione. Ognuna secondo l'esser suo sarà soccorresta. Esso Dio mirabilmente gli provederà, gli porrà inanzi ciò che farà de bisogno. Et se vederan cose da stupirsene. Nelli spirituali aiuti ancor più mirabilmente se sentirà la man propitia di Dio. Delli [969<sup>r</sup>] dubii saran risolute. Nelli cargi delle concupiscentie slezzarite. Li ardori saran temperati dalle rosade celesti. Et specialmente nella morte apparerà la possanza del soccorso della vertù divina. Saran tentate, ma non abbandonate. In mezzo delle tristezze delle tribulatione rideran le allegrezze delle consolatione. Non dico poi quel che dir non se po. Nel uscir di quel anima, con que novi canti, con que recoglienze, con que giubili et triomfi nel Ciel sarà ricevuta! Quante imperatrice desiderarian di haver pur una giozzetta de quei refrigerii che saran concessi alle minime di queste nostre, et non li sarà data!

# 23. Risposta

Brescia, Biblioteca Queriniana, ms. D.VII.8.

Risposta contro quelli persuadono la clausura alle Vergini di Sant'Orsola

Alle governatrici della Compagnia di sant'Orsola, ciò è alle matrone prudente et grave, et alli colonelli solliciti et vigilanti:

Spesse fiade fra mi considerando onde venga che questa nostra Compagnia a tante varie et sottili fozze sia combatuta et conquassata altra non veggio esser la causa che'l nemigo così la persequite, et a suo sommo potere se sforze de annichilarla, se non che in lei, a foggia speciale, il sa di chiaro esser nascosto qualche bel tesor divino.

Perché se'l non vedesse qui le vive semenze, qui lucer le vere scintille della sincera fede della Giesa santa (la quale, hoggi dì, quasi tutta estinta per gli chiari [1<sup>v</sup>] signali et esperientie evidentissime esser se comprende) certo il laro ascoso et affamato, con tanto sforzo et con così sottili vie, non s'affatigaria per destruerla.

Ma perché il cognosse qui Dio in specialitade haver posto un redutto a foggia de l'arca di Noè, non mancho securissimo che libero, et a ognun commune, di poterse salvare da tanto et quasi universale diluvio, da tanta moltitudine di corrottele, et

quasi una infinitade de pesti di heresie. Per questo l'arso nemigo del ben della salute homana non lassa via, non lassa mezzo alcuno da usare che'l non adopere per trare di sotto le povere alme da così securo et certo porto di salute [2<sup>r</sup>] accioché, rimoveste et smarite di sotto dalle ale della Giesa santa (il cui spirto, et vie vere qui son

piantate), caschasseno in eterna perditione.

Percioché fuor delli consiglii, fuor delle vie et voluntadi della santa Giesa, in fede della qual sola se dà la vertù della passione di Jesu Christo, mai in eterno potrà esser via alcuna di salute. Siché il diavolo, arso della perditione homana, a fozza di lupo affamato, considerando la fondatrice di questa sacra Compagnia di que santitade, et di que vero et vivo essempio d'ogni pura veritade divina, et et d'ogni sincero senso catholico la sia stata sempre per tutto il tempo della vita sua. Et come la sia lucesta al mondo a fozza dun lucido so[2<sup>v</sup>]le di fede chiara et amor divino, de ogni vera vertude et d'ogni real costume.

Siché chi non sa l'esser vero delle vertudi, delle vie della santa Giesa, et del vero senso et spirito di lei, guarde allo spirito della matre sor Angela et alli suoi andamenti, et stie in quelli. Et sarà vero et fidel catholico. Et non potrà pericolare, né esser trapollato dalla roina atroce dell'ira de Dio, che già va distendendose con furia grande sopra tutta la terra. Sapendo dico, il nemigo, le scintille di tal luce vera et viva esser accese in questa nostra congregatione, non cessa di sforzarse de smorzarle; et, sopra tutto, tenta con fozze astute et sottili di [3<sup>r</sup>] oscurare la fede di essa fondatrice. Il che fatto, possia poi la Compagnia tutta o destruerla, o falsificarla et porla fra gli novi soi spirituali.

Non pare, quel che dico, cosa nova: imperoché gridan le profetie, molti in questi nostri tempi esser per convertirse dalla vita mondana alla spirituale, ma cotali per la gran parte esser per esser falsi spirituali; anzi, loro dover esser il più cativo corno che abbia il dracone. Costoro, in spirito homano per non dire diabolico vivendo, et giudati secondo certi soi modi et andamenti novi et heretici, tanto più son lontani dalla vera vita, quanto più fan profetto in quel so spiritual fervore et [3<sup>v</sup>] ostinate vie di viver in singularità nova. Dio guarde ogni alma da così grande calamitade.

Siché l'astuta bestia sopra ogni altra cosa ha al petto di levar il precio delli consiglii et andamenti di tanta fondatrice, per far pigliar così amore alle sue nove vie. Perché che cosa altro è levar la fede di quella vergine se non estinguer la lucerna viva del catholico viver? se non sviar fuor della Giesa le smarite creature? Perché chi leva dalla fede di chi ha di chiaro la fede, che cosa fa altro, se non sbalzarlo for di essa fede?

Siché pensi, chi po, se'l demonio qui dee [4<sup>r</sup>] dormire; come qui il dee agguzzare, et armare la sua rabia a frachassare sto bene lassatone dalla infinita bontà di Dio! Et all'opposito, se qui ognuna de voi dee vigilare, et star sulla guardia a scapolare tanti sottili et infiniti lazzi, a venzer con la vertù del Altissimo sì gran sforzo di rabia et sì gran furia di nemigo delibelato.

Guai guai, grida San Giovan nel Apocalise, a chi habita in terra, perché ivi è discieso il dragone, havendo grand'ira, sapendo che puocho di tempo ci resta. Ecco ch'in questi nostri tempi, che son gli ultimi, il [4] dragone ha fortemente accesa la sua rabia. Ecco che ha la sua sedia in terra, ciò è nelle vie et consiglii terreni; nelli quali, che ge stanno, sono raccolti sotto la sua potestà. Siché non in terra dee esser l'aiuto nostro contra sì rabiata fiera, perché lì è la sua forza, et vittoria, ma in Cielo onde è sta scacciato et dove più ascender non po. In la sapientia adoncha del Figliol di Dio havemo a descoprire le sue astutie, a desguatare gli suoi lazzi, ad accorgerse

delle sue inboschate. Et in vertù della passione sua se ha a venzer la sua possanza, et fracchassare la sua rabiata schiera.

[5<sup>r</sup>] Siché vigilate voi tutte, o governatrice et custode de sì eletto grege; vigilate, et avertite che dal oscuro laro voleti esser tradite, se non fati più che bona guardia.

Non adesso vi voglio contare de tutti gli varii trattati et tradimenti chel se è sforzato di usare, et di continuo il se sforza. Come il vorìa stuppar la boccha, che nanche pur se nominasse in bene la fondatrice, spargendo di lei certi non mancho intempestivi ciffoli che venenati, nelle cose di lei sante et savie; dicendo haver potuto fallare; a foggie sottili levandogli la fede et fama. Come il precio della Compagnia oscura, né vole che le sue laude se spargano. Come gli mezzi necessarii et utili per mantenerla et augmentarla, levar non cessa. Et sotto appa[5<sup>v</sup>]rentia di pender solamente da Dio, cascare nella tentatione et maledittione di esso Dio. Come tirar al bene le anime con gli meggii ancor corporali non bisogna, ma lassar questo officio a Dio; se egli per lui solo le tirarà, le saran tirate, altramente il resto è vano. Openione pestifera et più che heretica.

Non parlo di cosa ancor peggiore, come il se sforza et se è sforzato de spiantarla da gli consiglii celesti, anzi dal petto di esso Dio, et piantarla negli consiglii terreni, per non dire diabolici, contrafazzendola con riti, et vie estranee, et heretice. Et questo ancor per meggio delli proprii. Et altre pur [6<sup>r</sup>] assai astutie usa, et ha usato. Fra le quale, adesso, un novo tradimento se è scoperto, tanto più pestifero quanto più pare haver del ragionevole. Il qual solo adesso manifestar voglio. Et rebatterlo, con

la viva spada della veritade.

Quando qualche una ha consentuto a dar il suo nome in questa Compagnia, o già l'ha dato, a una di queste tre fozze il demonio ne la roba: o col rivoltarse al mondo, o col far vita spirituale secondo altri modi et riti novi, o col voler intrare nelli monasterii. Le qual tre foggie, però, [6<sup>v</sup>] tutte prociedeno da una sola radice principalmente, ciò è dal perder nel cor suo il prezzo et amore di essa Compagnia. Et la lei luce nova essendogli incomminciata a accender da Dio nel petto, loro sciocchamente, sotto specie di bene, lassciarsela a pocho a pocho smorzare, accioché in lor il spirito di Dio, che per tal luce d'amore se gli cresceva nel core, del tutto sradicato se perda. Et così se rivolteno, o del tutto alla corporal vita, o, se persevereno nella spirituale, farsela quella a un certo suo modo humano, o heretico. Et così, nel spirito di superbia, darse al spirito. Il che altro non è che adorar o se stesso, o esso demonio, sotto pensamento di adorare il ve[7<sup>r</sup>]ro Iddio.

Qui ben se mire questo ponto, che solamente nel spirito di Dio et nelle sue vie se po adorar Dio. Hor questoro communemente, per innobilire la vita sua presa, dicono nessuna esser meglior regola che quella di Christo, né meglior professione che quella del battesemo. Et, che ha Christo, ha il tutto, et che basta obedir a Dio. Et a sto modo, più savie di savii et santi, come che esse non già sian nella via di retrovare essa veritade et esso bene, ma già l'habbian nelle mani, sopra ogni altezza di cogni-

tione se pongono.

[7] Nanche a quelle che voleno maridarse, manchano le sue ragioni apparente, per escusare et coprire le sue vergo[g]ne; dicono che ancor maritate pono far bene, et ancor in tal vita potersi salvare, et che, maritandose, non se pecca. Et così vanno con questi colori consolando la sua dannatione. Meschinissime; almancho non infettasseno altre semplice. Ma più presto avisasseno ognuna a non caschare in simil calamitade. Ma di queste più non voglio parlare.

Vengo a quelle che adesso novamente han conturbata la Compagnia, col moversegli il core a andar monache; [8<sup>r</sup>] opera certamente nata da invidia diabolica, per levar il precio per cosifatte vie a questa sì nobil Compagnia. Più noceno costoro con tal suo atto, che non fan quelle che al mondo se revoltano, Queste, adonca, che han fatto questo così desleal atto, per signali chiari se ha compreso che per propria maggior commodidate, et non per meglio servire a Dio, han lassate le proprie sorelle: gli rincreseva con le mani proprie aquistare il pane, et viver del quotidiano suo sudore. Se desconfidavan della providentia divina, temendo di cascar in bisogni. Et la causa di alzar la fede sua in Dio abbandonando, ascostamente robandose se fan riciever nelli conventi, parendogli [8<sup>v</sup>] bella cosa andar a tavola parecchiata, et mangiar il pane non sapendo donde il venga.

Io già non voglio dire che le faccian peggio a far così, che non fan quelle che al mondo del tutto se ritornano. Ma nanche lo voglio negare. Io lo lassio al giudicio divino. Ma ben una cosa voglio dire, che, voglia come la sia, hano fatto male et cosa ingiusta a abbandonare la sua Compagnia. Et tutte quelle, si se ne sono, che sian per abbandonarla, sono per far male, et ingiustamente; salvo, se non ce fusse qualche

causa accidentale, per la quale fusseno constrette a farlo.

Hor qui ognuna stie attenta alle ragioni [9<sup>r</sup>] vive et chiare che son per dire, per monstrar questo. Poi metterò tutte quelle sue openioni, over, per dir più propriamente, falsitade inorpelate, per le quale non solamente le fortificano il suo fallo, ma ancora cercano de indur altre a far il simile. La quale se rebatteranno così che in mazzor gloria della nostra Compagnia tutto se convertirà.

Hor adoncha, o voi fidele governatrice, non lassati che'l demonio così vi smarischa la Compagnia, et con malitiose vie ve conchulche et vi straccie il grege vostro. Et poi, quando il ve haverà divorato delle pecore, monstrarvi ancor che lè ben fatto, per deleggiarvi maggiormente. Et, oltra il danno, pigliar spasso de voi. [9<sup>v</sup>] Opponiamose contra di lui, et facciamo così, che per lui il confesse, che molto gli saria stato meglio a non tentarla, vedendo tutto esser uscito in maggior sua confusione et in più felice honore della Compagnia nostra.

Dite andonco a costoro, alle quale viene sì spietata voglia, ditigli, dico, con la fronte descoperta, che fanno ingiustamente a uscire della professione propria, non essendogli causa alcuna di necessitade. Et poi, ancor che la ce fusse, non sareve atto licito et civile andarsene senza bona licentia, et commune consenso, et satisfattione

di tutta la Compagnia.

Et non solamente lor fanno male, et indebi[10<sup>r</sup>]tamente, ma ancor che le riceveno, perché piglian quello che è d'altrui, et lor il danno. Percioché se la regola nostra
deveda a ricever quelle che han fatto promissione a monasterii, tanto più e monasterii deno esser ancor lor ritrose a ricever quelle che non solamente han fatto la
promissione alla Compagnia, ma ancora se han già date. Perché esse non pon dar elle se stesse, perché più non son sue, Percioché de fermo et libero consenso se han
date a questa Compagnia. Et la Compagnia le han ricevute. Adoncha fano quello,
che giustamente né con bona conscientia lo pono fare. Né mai il dovere della caritade lo admetterìa.

[10<sup>v</sup>] Poi urtatile con varie ragioni a representargli la gravezza del errore suo. Ditigli: que legerezza de inconstantia è, dove primo se ha consentuto ragionevolmente di stare, poi senza causa cangiar voglia, a ussirne? Ditigli ancora che è cosa ingiusta

abbandonar la propria matre et proprie sorelle per cercarne altre. Et di questo ponetigli inanzi alli occhii tale similitudine. Sicome non se po lassar un, già eletto per sposo, per pigliarne un altro, così nanche una matre, una sorella, una Compagnia già eletta, non è lecito lassarla. Et ancor ingeritigli questa altra comparatione fortamente a proposito. Sicome quel soldato fa ingiustamente, il quale, havendo pigliata la caparra o paga sotto [11<sup>r</sup>] un capitaneo, poi va et milita sotto uno altro, così lor, havendo pigliata qui la bona mano, et havendo ricevuta la disciplina, la cura et il governo da questa Compagnia, ingiustamente van altrove.

Oltra ciò, adducetigli queste altre quatro belle ragioni:

Primo, essendo questa Compagnia, Compagnia del Figliol de Dio adesso novamente piantata nel mondo, impiamente, et senza riverentia di tanto Signore fanno quelle che ne ussisseno, non appreciando, non honorando quello che Dio vole che

se honore et apprecie.

Dapoi, con ciò sia cosa che questa vita sia secondo il viver apostolico et della primitiva Giesa, adesso da Dio rinovato: dove quello che se ha se ha come non se havesse; et desegnato [11] alle superiore, se spende non secondo il proprio voler, ma secondo la voluntade di chi governa; et quelle che non hanno, viveno lietamente alla giornata, per haver maggior causa di pender solamente da Dio con la fede et con la speranza. Andando mo monache, lassan questa vita prima et apostolica, et cascan dall'alto al basso, percioché abbandonan la occasione di maggior fede et speranza in Dio. Perché la povertade et bisogno produce sempre mazzor causa di amore et fede di Dio. Nelli monasterii, essendo proveduto in commune, perisse in particulare questa special occasione di speranza dove bisogna viver delle proprie fatighe.

Per non dire quel che se dice, specialmente da san Vincenzo, della declinatione delli monasterii dalle prime sue antique ob[12<sup>r</sup>]servantie; il che essendo, que savia

elettion sareve questa: per far più bene, andar in corrottele?

La terza ragion è che danno mal essempio alle altre sorelle di appreciar poco la regola soa, ponendogli scandalo grave di affredirsegli, o consentire a simili sue voglie ingiuste et sciocche. Et almancho voglian qui spaventarse, per le minazze spavente[vo]le che Dio fa a chi dan causa di cosifatti scandali, dicendo: «Vae per quem scandala venerint!» Ciò è: guai a quelli, per gli quali verranno i scandali. Né mai se pone, nelle divine ire, guai che non importe dannatione eterna. Siché miren bene

che cosa importan sti cativii essempii.

[12<sup>v</sup>] Ultimamente fanno contra natura et il precetto divino, che commanda che se habbia a honorare la matre. Et, se la matre corporale, tanto più la matre spirituale. Hor costoro, abbandonando la matre Angela, che cosa fan altro se non renegare la matre che spiritualmente le ha generate? Et così caschare nella desobedientia del commandamento di Dio? Non dico poi, che do volte nascer non se po; nanche Dio è mutabile, che 'l voglia dar il suo Spirito hor a un modo, hor a un altro. Non di quello che san Paolo commanda, che se deban stare in quella vocatione che Dio ha chiamato. Nanche dico come san Piero dice, che se debbia amare la propria Compagnia et confraternitade. Et come costoro violan questo [13<sup>r</sup>] mandato apostolico, abbandonando così esse sue sorelle.

Hor queste ragioni per hora basteno a mostrargli almancho in parte la gravezza del suo fallo. Benché a quelle che peccano per malitia, ragion non valeno. Ma solamente a quelle che peccano per errore giovaranno; et ancor, accioché altre poco avedute non se infettassen ad simili essempii. Il che importa quasi il tutto; et per

questo se ha componesto specialmente questa epistola.

Hor, se ce fussen (come nè stata una) che dicessen che così sono inspirate da Dio, ditigli subito che ben vardeno, che in una parola non le commetteno tre biasteme contra Dio. La prima, che non chiamen le proprie voglie inique, inspiration divina. La seconda, che [13<sup>v</sup>] non faccian Dio mutabile, che, havendola chiamata in questa nostra regola, mo la voglie far rinascer in un altra. La terza biastema, che consequisse da quella sola parola, è che, Dio essendo Dio di pace, mo volen che'l sia conturbator della Compagnia et Dio de mormori et di desprecii, specialmente di

quella che egli ha piantata, et inspirata, et appreciata.

Che cosa volen dir costoro con queste sue inspirationi, se pur non sono più presto simulationi? O, se son inspirationi, sapiasse che ce ne son di tre sorte: una è de insogni homani, che è la stessa vanitade; l'altra vien dal demonio; la terza dal Spirito Santo, spirito di amore et concordia, d'allegrezza et pace. Voremo dire, noi, che queste conturbationi vengan [14] dal Spirito Santo? Non già tal parola mai ne uscisse fuor dei labri. Se fossen queste inspirationi divine, signali grandi ce sarian, ce saria gaudio, ce sarian i cori pacificati. Non tristezze, non refredimenti della caritade et del precio di essa regola. Siché costoro imparen, imparen, dico, a pensare, a parlare et fare cose megliore. O dalle opere et dai frutti dimonstreno il so bon spirito.

Hor veniamo a descoprire certo veleno sottile, chel dragone non cessa de spander per la Compagnia, per rafredir gli cori nel amore di essa. Et principalmente ne son due sorti. Una è che avelena gli spiriti, sotto coperta che è bene gir a più perfetta vita, come sono gli monasterii. Laltra, [14<sup>v</sup>] col dire, anzi col torzer la bocca et il naso sopra la Compagnia: que Compagnia la è, che ognun se ne mena beffe? Frati, preti specialmente, et altre persone savie. Et che se dubita ancor della salute della fondatrice, biasmata da pur assai. Et que fondamento la ha, nuda de indulgentie, et debole de confirmatione ecclesiastice, apena comprobata da un solo Vicario! Et meritamente quella sor Angela esser vituperata, che habbia sollicitato tante vergini a prometter virginitade, senza un risguardar dove la le lassava nelli perigoli del mondo onde havesseno o perigolare, o a ma[15<sup>r</sup>]ridarse, o pigliar altro partito. De qui esser, che se vede, che né gentili homini, né gentil donne, o altre persone di cunto non hano piacer, né voleno che sue figlie ce intreno, ma esser compagnia de vil sorte di persone, massare et povere creature. Et che se pensavela di fare? di imitar ancor lei un santo Benedetto, una santa Chiara, un santo Francesco. «Anzi ancor ella ha volesto esser da più, et pensava, assegurandose, a poner vergini in mezzo del mondo, cosa che mai ardite alcun de patriarchi».

O biastemme intolerabile contra il Spirito Santo. Non ve accorgiete ancor voi, che queste son voci non homane ma diabolice, non celesti ma infernale, non angelice ma vottezzate del meggio del petto di satanaso, per le quale le inavedute anime se ingegna di trapolare, et tirarsele sotto il suo giogo, [15<sup>v</sup>] mentreche i consigli celesti così svilania, et li mette in vil conto? Ma ribattemogli questi desprecii nella propria faccia, et dal vituperio che contra noi usa ne nasca maggior gloria nostra. Et così, a sua maggior confusione, ne habbia giovato nella sua malignitade. O infelice quelle creature, che al diavol serveno in così abominevole officio! Ma hormai incomminciamo a respondergli a ponto per ponto. Che dicano che molti se ne fan beffe: per questo la rason sua non vale, che per questo la merite vituperio, perché pochi o nesuni homini virtuosi et santi sono, né son stati, che non sian stati sbeffati et vituperati. Fin il Signor nostro fo schernito, non che poi ogni altro dee patir [16<sup>t</sup>] questo. Libere son le lingue; ognun po dir ciò che gli piace, perché ha il libero arbi-

trio. Né sta a noi che cadaun non pense et dica ciò che gli deletta, o bene, o male. Falsamente, adoncha, parlan quelli, gli quali voglion dire che la Compagnia nostra è degna de vituperio perché da molti è vituperata et schernita, Anzi de qui in specialitade ognun, che ha intelletto, po et dee cavare la causa di haverla in mazzor conto et precio, vedendo allei intravenire quello che sol accader a ogni cosa buona et santa. Et, se altro non fusse che probasse che in lei lucesse il sincero lume della vera fede, né fusse della parte heretica, questi tali delegiamenti sufficientissimamente lo doverian demostrare, [16<sup>v</sup>] perché cotali sbeffamenti sempre fo opera di persone cattive et corrotte, et specialmente, alli tempi nostri, di persone heretice et falsi spirituali, contra quelli che schiettamente et fidelmente caminano secondo le usanze et precetti della Giesa. Dicendo la Scrittura: «Erunt in novissimis temporibus illusores». Ciò è: nelli ultimi tempi sarrando sbeffatori; cioè alli tempi nostri, che son gli ultimi.

Siché, che maraviglia è se semo sbeffati, nella abondantia di malegni sbeffatori? Benché questa nostra Compagnia è di tal decentia et ragionevole costume, ancor secondo ogni giudicio naturale, che nesuni [17] se non gli malegni tocchi da invidia del ben far, la pono vituperare. Nanche è tanta moltitudine che la biasme, come costor dicono. Il che fanno, o secondo la comune natura di cativi, che, como lor sono, tutti credono che sian; o perché così vorian; overo perché, così mentendo malitiosamente, vorebbeno che tal luce di vita fusse del tutto morta. Perché nanche è vero, ma buggia espressa che alcun homo savio et religioso bono la vitupere, perché nanche vituperare la pono con giusta veritade. Ma ben gli rei da biasman». Da chi mai era più biasmato il Salvadore, che da essi cativi sacerdoti et dottori della lege? et questo solamente per dispetto et invi[17]dia? o che sanno esser rea «cativa» o no? se sano, perché apertamente questo non monstrano? se non sano, per che cosa il dubio non interpretano in meglior parte? o almancho stian sospesi? Cosa da maligna anima è voler vituperar quello che vituperabil non è. Conciosiacosache salvar se doverìa, quanto possibil fusse, sel fusse dubio, che così ogni dover vole.

Di quello, che con tortura de boccha et rufamenti di naso, trufando dicano: «Che Compagnia la è?» Se la volen intenderla, aldeno. La è tale, che la minima di essa, che se sarà sforzata di viver secondo la sua regola, sa[18<sup>r</sup>]rà tale che, incoronata di gloria, giudicarà tutta la possanza del mondo. Siché specialmente questi tali delusori, standogli sotto gli piedi, con strizzigamenti de denti et torture di core saran constretti a dire con grave crucio: «Ecco quelle che sbeffavamo, dicendole vile et masserame. Ecco, come sono fra il numero di eletti di figlii di Dio. Noi, noi semo stati le vile creature, le pazze, ma lor le nobile et savie». Saran tanto belle et potente, che tutta la furia et brutezza diabolica, pur a vederle, tremando se tormentaranno.

Sa, sa il demonio già fin hora la confusione che l'aspetta da tale vergini, et per questo, [18°] in vendetta della sua futura pena, cerca adesso, per gli suoi membri, di sbeffarle almancho, poi che nol po tirarle nel suo regno. Ma il fa, ancor qui, da pazzo. Perché questo in mazzor suo tormento redondarà. Giustamente il giudice eterno sententiarà che, chi haverà pigliato piacere qui, in questo mondo, in sbeffare ingiustamente, piglie dispiacere in laltro in esser sbeffato giustamente. Siché o tu, che così sbergnie, sappi che la Compagnia nostra è cosifatta. Et pur ancor non se dice le special gratie sue, che hano, et haveran da Dio». Et se non lo credi, sta securo, che presto ne sarai certo et lo proverai. O quanto faresti meglio, almancho, di far opera de homo di commune senso, et sospender il giudicio in quello [19<sup>r</sup>] che non sai di certo, che lassarti signorezzare da spiriti così malegni et pazzi.

Di quello che dicon, che se dubita della salute della fondatrice, qui potria addure una infinitade di cose, a mostrare quanto sia empia et scelerata questa malegna voce. Ma una sola ne dirò. È di necessitade di natura che un malegno dubite della salvatione d'ogni santo. Perché, sicome egli porta seco un continuo et tacito timore, et quasi certezza della sua dannatione eterna, così da sé naturalmente è constretto a giudicar del prossimo, specialmente perché così il slezzerisse la sua interiore tristezza. Ma almancho costoro non se lassassen cecare così dalla soverchia malitia sua il senso commune, per [19<sup>v</sup>] il qual han potuto veder et provare di chiaro la espressa et singulare santitade di quella vergine in tutti e conti. Et dire quel che essa cosa lo constrenzereve: «Se ella dee esser dannata, chi poi sarà salvo?».

Di quello che dicon, questa nostra Compagnia non haver fondamento, et esser povera di agiuti della Giesa, di indulgentie, privilegii, et simili, né aver confirmatione alcuna nella Giesa, eccetto che da uno solo vicario: tutte queste parole sono piene di malignitade, di matescha ignorantia et temeritade. O presontuose lingue, onde sano che non ha fondamento? Onde sano questo, dico? Son lor [20] forse tanto divini, che habbian speculato tutto il petto di Dio, et non habbian ritrovato che ivi la sia radicata? o è disceso un di più alti spiriti a rivelargelo? o un altra fiada prosontione sfazzata! Non ha fondamento? L'é più fermata che non è il Ciel con tutti gli elementi. Et chi ha potuto così piantarla, ha potuto ancor et ha saputo farlo sapere. Non ha le grande indulgentie, né li saldi previlegii. Adoncha per questo non sarà eccellentissima, et da Dio ordenata? o ragioni matesche! Perché, sicome è possibile et verissimo che molte persone santissime sono in Cielo, et tutta via non sono canonizzate dalla Giesa, così è verissimo che questa regola, ancor che non ha [20] bia tante comprobationi della Giesa, è dignissima nel conspetto de Dio.

Dapoi ancor costoro mateschamente parlano, perché ogni santa persona et santa Compagnia non è santa perché la sia così honorata, ma è honorata perché la è santa. Et bisogna che prima la sia et buona et santa, et poi così sia appreciata et adornata. Anzi dirò ch'avanti tante indulgentie, più luce di santitade è lucesta in molte regole, che dopo. Perché le indulgentie, specialmente, se danno per disponere et eccitare la fede, confirmando tal vita, et cosifatte opere, esser secondo il voler divino, et perdonando insiema con Dio gli peccati, mentreche se ha a grato ogni opera così operata.

Poi forse a Dio piace che [21<sup>r</sup>] senza tante gratie de indulgentie di fuora via, questa sua Compagnia fiorischa, Egli promettendogli di special privilegio la sua benedittione. Et certo è così, perché la fondatrice, alle obediente della regola, ha promesso la plenaria benedittione del Patre eterno, dal qual discende ogni paternitade et perdonanza.

Finalmente queste indulgentie non inferisseno perfettione, anzi agiuto per sollevare le grande imperfettioni. Fono tante sante et santi nella primitiva Giesa. Fo santa Orsola con la sua compagnia, senza questi doni esteriori. Ma hebberon ben ogni indulgentia et tutti gli privilegii dalla bontade infinita di Dio, però nella Giesa sua. Imperoché Dio né egli fa gratia alcuna senza la sua Giesa, né essa Giesa senza Dio dona cosa alcuna. Perché ce sono due sorte di indulgentie della Giesa [21<sup>v</sup>] santa: una è tacita, et interiore, l'altra è manifestata et exteriore. Con la interiore gratia, continuamente sopra ogni creatura che vive secondo il voler di Dio, spiega ogni sua benedittione, conformandose con lui et laudandol infinitamente. Ancorché esteriormente, et in particolaritade non se cognossesse questo. Et tale è sorte delle più cernite alme che sian nella Giesa. Le quale, serviendo, ascendono in Dio, secondo gli consiglii di essa Chiesa, senza tanti suoi speroni et charezze di indulgentie di fuora.

Falsamente, adonca, costoro provan che la nostra Compagnia sia da esser havuta in vil conto, perché non sia fortificata di tante indulgentie et privilegii, essendo de qui più degna di ammiratione. Che pur [22<sup>r</sup>] questo dee esser mirabil nelli occhii dell'intelletto d'ogni creatura sana di giudicio: che questa Compagnia, senza privilegii et brievi apostolici, senza favori et agiuti humani, anzi con tutte le persecutioni, tutta via dura. Questo non è altro che la vertù divina, il dito vivo di Dio. Le discipline, et altre molte regole, non è così maraviglia, perché hanno havuto i gran favori et corroboratione homane.

Ultimamente, a che fozza loro pono sapere che ancor esteriormente no la sia per haver le mazzor gratie dalla Giesa, che mai havesseron regole? Chi po saper il voler di Dio in questo? Imparen adoncha costoro prima a saper ben tacere, accioché pos-

sian poi ben parlare.

[22] Che ancor se sforzeno di despreciarla, mentreche van dicendo che nobile non ce intrano, ma solamente artiste et altre ignobile. Qui il diavol parla contra di sé. Qui se cava gli ochii con le proprie mani, come sempre fo di sua usanza. Potrebelo più veramente lodare questa Compagnia? Potrebelo più attamente assimigliarla alla compagnia apostolica? Nanche gentil homini, o gentil donne giudee sequivan Jesu Christo, eccetto puochi all possibile, come san Lazzaro et santa Martha. Et narra san Luca, che molti della plebe, et fin di essi soldati, givan a farse battizzare da san Giovan Battista. Et gli gran maestri et [23] gentil homini, lor dicevan sé haver Moisè. Come dicon ancor costoro sé haver gli monasterii, come che la dotrina et disciplina nostra sia contraria a quella delli patriarchi. Sicome ancor gli andamenti et spirito di san Giovan Battista non era contrario, anzi conforme a Moisè. O ingannatori, che cosa fan costoro? Fanno che, sicome quelli giudici che così refudavan San Giovan, poi non fussen né de san Giovan, né di Moisè, così ancor costoro fanno, che sian poi né de san Benedetto o santa Chiara, né della matre nostra.

Ma a proposito del dire le nostre vergini esser ignobile, doverian pur qui, quello che è chiarissimo, vedere: proprio esser della [23<sup>v</sup>] sapientia di Dio, de persone basse et vile nel mondo, innobilirle a confusione di essi mondani grandi et nobili, che

essi humiliar non se voleno a sequir le vie divine.

Elesse gli apostoli poveri, egli povero, col patre et matre artiste et poveri. Et tutta via a san Piero, pescadore, tutta la potentia humana se gli inchina et fa riverentia. Percioché la vera nobeltade et conditione signorile sta nel core, nella prudentia del saper eleger quel che sopra ogni altra cosa se ha da amare. Che quale il sarà, tale sarà ancor il core et l'alma di chi l'haverà amato.

[24] Di quello (per finir hormai di responder a tante malignitade temerarie «perché mi rincresse a dar risposta a tutto, che troppo ce saria da fare») di quello, dico, che non hano tremore, pur nanche a pensarlo, contra tale et tanta vergine, che l'ha volesto parer più savia di essi patriarchi, tentando quello che lor mai hebbero ardire di tentar. O prosontioni malegne, Et biasteme prosontuose. Volen costoro fare essa matre la più schioccha et più superba che quasi sia stata. Serrate su sì prosontuose bocche. Che la più humile di lei non hebberon i tempi nostri. «O biasteme contra le opere della somma Trinitade, che ha con la onipotentia sua reformata quella alma, et con la sapientia governata, et con la vertù santificata. Rafrena, una altra fiada, dico, sta lingua maledetta». Che ciò che quella vergine ha fatto, tutto è sta fatto in commandamento, «et in vertude» del Figliol di Dio. Et non di propria presontio [24] ne, come ben tu mentisse. Il che se non è, monstramelo dalle opere sue

contrarie a tal fede. Se le opere sue questo non inferisseno, perché cosa almancho il dubio non interpreti in la meglior parte, come la lege naturale vole?

Ha tentato, dirai, opera che mai tentorno tanti santi. Adoncha, secondo te (io già no'l dico) et la consonantia delle tue parole, è maggiore di essi santi, mentreche ha fatto opere che altri non han potuto fare. Primo, perché non se sa la voluntade de Dio, che quanto più un piace a Dio, tanto quello è più grande. Dapoi è possibil che un fazza mazzore opere, et tutta via non sia mazzore. Josuè più fe de Moisè, et gli Apostoli più di esso Figliol di Dio. Et maiora horum facietis». Se tu dice che non duraranno, perché sono nelli mezzi delli perigoli, et già molte ne uscisseno, questo è falsissimo, perché già tanti anni duran, non per agiuti homani, ma in fortezza propria, datagli però da Dio. Nanche perigolaran, perché anche molte salde et sante sono morte, che pur han perseverato. [25<sup>r</sup>] Et questa è la sua mirabil gloria, che in mezzo delli perigoli et di essi demonii, tutta via perseveran.

Né le tue, et altre simili pestifere voci un quancho le pon conquassare. Né quelle che usisseno fanno, né già mai faranno, che molte più non ne intreno, et molto più essa Compagnia non crescha. Ancor vivendo fina esso san Francescho, molti ne usivan delli soi. Né Giuda reo fe che gli altri non fusseno boni. O potete sminuire il numero da Dio ordenato? O quanto sarebbe meglio cangiar voglie, et l'aiuto da salvarse, che la infinita bontade di Dio se è dignato di porgerne, cognosserlo et [25<sup>v</sup>] et abbrazzarlo con disio. Et non fare, che non solamente tu ti gli tiri di sotto, ma ancor, sicome invidioso del ben del prossimo, col to mal dirne, sforzarte di rimover ancor altri, accioché diventi reo non solamente della perzeda della tua anima, ma ancor di

molte altre.

Fin hora così transcorrendo, havemo rebattute le manifeste biasteme et vituperii, che se usa contra la Compagnia nostra et essa fondatrice. Mo voltiamose a quelli che, non di dritto, ma tortamente la svilisseno quanto lor pono. Le voci di quali tanto sono più noiose, quan[26<sup>r</sup>]to più pareno haver del verisimile. Et quanto è vero, chel veleno coperto più noce. Dicendo: dove è più perfetta vita, lì sempre fo bene di redurse. Molte esser le ragione, nelli conventi meglio poterse salvare et far bene,

che qui in questa. Anzi ancor ogni cosa li più santamente farse.

Principalmente quella clausura, nella quale sola, quasi al mondo sotterate, tronchano tutte le occasioni delle delettationi mondane, dice un gran schalino di perfettione. Et però da tutti gli patri antiqui tanto proccatiata. Siché per questo nelli monasterii haverse causa maggior di far bene, essendo così serrate fora da mille impedimenti et mille perigoli, che altramente qui in questa [26] regola stando, patiscono. Poi, quel esser privata d'ogni cosa propria, avanza ciò che qui di bene se faccia. Ancor, aggiongon, una minima obedientia che nelli conventi se fa, esser di mazzor merto che non ancor le nostre mazzore, perché lì ogni lor atto è benedetto, et di gratie dotato dalla Giesa. «Ancor predicano, essergli la licentia della Giesa, che si po levarse de una religione et andar in un altra più perfetta».

Ultimamente dicono: che mal è andar monache? (ancorché la cosa fosse equale!); che per questo non le abandonan il servire a Dio, essendo le religioni bone, et fon-

date in Spirito Santo. Allor bastare, purché serviano a esso Iddio.

Per tali, et altri cosifatti ciffoli diabolici, alcune creature venenate lassano questa angelica vita, et sotto apparentia o di egua[27<sup>r</sup>]le, o meglior bene, ingiustamente accostano l'animo suo alli monasterii, non accorgendose che queste non sono ragioni

vere, ma apparente et false. Non sono voci divine et angelice, ma infernale et diabolice. Veneno fino confettato son ste parole. Hor mostremelo chiaramente.

Principalmente, ancor che fusse così, come lor dicono, ciò è che gli monasterii fusseno di meglior vita che la nostra Compagnia, tutta via queste voci sareveno inique et ingiuste. Primo, perché cosa ingiusta è senza dubio quel che è daltrui, cercare di farselo suo, et non risguardare a molte altre ragioni che se han detto di sopra. [27] Dappoi, perché sono voci dette non a tempo et for di proposito. Il che fa che ancor una cosa et parola ottima in sé, tutta via sia pessima et mortale. Una medicina bonissima in sé, ma data non sicome conviene, darà la morte. Allhora conveniente sarian quando una persona, accesa di divino desiderio di far vita strettissima, et allhora, se così fussen essi monasterii, giustamente cosifatti consiglii se usarian. Ma qui questo non è accadesto, né po accader, come vederemo di sotto. Ma più presto sono nocive cosifatte parole, sicome dette fuor di tempo et fuor d'ogni ragione. Perché molte, raccolte del mondo all'odore di questa Compagnia, che altramente non ce sarian moste a uscirne, sentendo così il prezzo di essa regola sminuirse per la [28<sup>r</sup>] comparatione di monasterii, perderà l'amor a essa vita, la quale prima haveva in precio singulare. Et per tal fede la se era despicchata dal mondo. Et così la meschinella, mal informata, non sarà né di la nostra regola, né di quella di monasterii. Ecco, come tale parole così dette non a tempo siano mortale. Guai a quelli, che così van spargendo tale semenze. Et diventano seminatori della morte. Il che tanto è vero che, ancor che tale, talmente imbeverate, andasseno monache, fariano male. Non che diciamo tale religioni non esser più che sante, purché santamente in quelle se viva, et secondo la mente della santa Giesa et sua regola, purché al mondo morte sian. Ma, concedendo ancor che così di certo se viva, non per questo starìa bene a abbandonare la nostra regola per [28<sup>v</sup>] andar nelli monasterii.

La ragione viva è questa: che Dio non a uno modo salva, ancor dico in quello medemo stato o grado di vita. Non per una via tira quello et quello. Nanche a ogni natura usa una sol recetta. Ma (sicome) allui piace et cognosse esser meglio, chiama et inspira una via di viver a uno, et un'altra allaltro. La quale egli ha da seguitare di necessitade, «ciò è se poi Dio non lo aiutasse, per un altro so consiglio, secondo quel detto: Despexisti omne meum consilium. Altramente se cadderebbe in la superbia diabolica, di più fazzendo il consiglio diabolico, o altramente proprio, o dun altro, che il divino. Et insiema negando la gran sapientia di Dio, in adoperare varii meggii a varie persone. Percioché così egli nella eterna sua sapientia ha [29<sup>r</sup>] ordenato, che non a ognuno ogni cosa convenga. Et però, sicome nelle cose humane, uno, al qual Dio ha data la natura et inclinatione naturale di far un arte, lodargli un altra dove non ha aiuto naturale, roinarà quella creatura, così nella spiritual vita, se Dio ha promesso di aiutare et glorificare in una sorte di obedientia, et ha invitato per li soi ministri, o ha inspirato, se gli sarà lodata un'altra et l'accettarà, cadderà in roina. Sicome le vergini di sant'Orsola mai sarian gloriose martire, se altra vita, altramente lodata et santa sequire havessen voluto. Perché (come se dice) Dio non è mutabile, [29<sup>v</sup>] ma parla, se no una fiada. Inspira, chiama la creatura, dove se po salvare «secondo il voler suo», se seguitar vole il suo consiglio. Et indarno ella crederà poterse salvare in altri consiglii, o suoi o alieni, che sono o heretici, o di homini mondani, o di spirituali falsi et seduttori, o di ignoranti et superbi senza spirito vero.

Per queste et altre pur assai ragioni, ancor che fusse, come lor dicono, che gli monasterii fussen di maggior perfettione, fareveno male costoro, et iniquamente, a essortare alcuna delle nostre a andargli. Ma quanto poi il peccato suo comparerà

gravissimo quando di chiaro se haverà mostrato la nostra esser [30<sup>r</sup>] di mazzor eccellentia!

Hor qui mi doglio esser constretto a far queste comparationi, le quale soleno esser odiose. Mi doglio, dico, che queste inconsiderate lingue habbian redutta la cosa a tal ponto, che di necessitade sia, per resuscitare la fede delle vie di Dio nel petto a molte, contender con costoro qual regola sia più perfetta. Io so quanto cosifatti parengonamenti sian in scandali et vituperii appresso a ogni homo di bon intelletto, ma la colpa sola sia di quelli che lor primi han tentato queste comparationi. Che io, volendo mantenire l'honor di Dio in questa regola [30<sup>v</sup>] et la lei fede, non posso fare, che non risponda a queste fastidiose et inique lingue, secondo che lor ancor parlano. Talmente san Paolo, per conservare il precio suo et reputatione, perché era necessario per la salute di molti, fo constretto non solamente laudarse allincontro de molti, ma ancora anteponerse molto alloro. Così ancor noi, per refermare et invigorire la fede et l'amore di questa santa regola nelle anime di molte, non saremo degni di reprensione, se soblimaremo la Compagnia nostra. Siché qui ognuno giustamente ne habbia a perdonare.

[31<sup>r</sup>] Ma hormai affrontemose con costoro, che sotto coverta di zelo delle laudi delle religione claustrale, se sforzano de striarne le nostre vergini. Hor, che dicano che le son più perfette della nostra, et che ivi più santamente se po vivere, noi respondemo apertamente che questo parlare è presontuoso et falso. Presontuoso, perché dice così, come che egli sia stato il consiglier di Dio a introdure nella Giesa questa Compagnia, et a tal modo il sappia che ogni altra più gli piaccia che questa. Imperoché, quanto più una cosa è grata a Dio, tanto più quella è perfetta et bella. Se a costoro mo fosse manifesto il petto divino sopra ciò, forse mal sareve a chiamargli presontuosi. Pon pur qui avederse [31<sup>v</sup>] della sua palpabil mattezza, se non sono più che topine. E falso perché, se voleno, dalle conditione esteriori et signali della vita, comprendere la dignitade «nella quale la è appresso a Dio», la nostra eccederà le altre. Imperoché se assimiglia alla più perfetta vita che mai sia stata né sarà, perché sequita il fior di tutte le vite. La vita di santa Marta, santa Tecla, et altri primi fiori della santa Giesa, et specialmente della Madonna.

Ma qui non è il logo de spiegar le secrete eccellentie di questa divina sorte di viver; secrete, et palese a chi ha gli occhii sinceri di vederlo. Solamente respondiamo per hora alle ragioni che costoro dicono, per levarne questa singular la[32<sup>r</sup>]ude. Dicono le altre regole esser più perfette, per quella clausura celebrata dalli santi patri, pieni di Spirito Santo, per la via megliore. O argomenti erronei et fallaci. Adonca, secondo costoro, ogni alma che non è vivesta sotto clausura è stata mancho perfetta. Et tante fiorite vergine non hanno havuta la compita santitade perché non sono così state serrate. Sant'Orsola in questa parte fo mancha di prudentia, che non elesse tale clausura alla sua compagnia, accioché la fusse più perfetta per haverla più tolta dalle occasioni dal peccare.

Ma que bisogna qui più distenderse con parole? [32] Hormai da sé scoprisse la falsitade del suo fondamento, anzi una occulta et torta biastema della Giesa et dello Spirito. Et insiema un giudicio temerario et falso della Compagnia nostra. Primo, la Giesa è stata, nel suo primo et aureo stato di viver, senza clausure, né seraglie di conventi. Dapoi, declinando, sono successi gli monasterii. Siché costoro, preferendo la vita claustrale a ogni altra, veneno a sbassare la stessa perfettione, et primitivo et aureo stato della santa Giesa, al qual se assimiglia questa nostra, che pur pare cosa

bella, a conside[33<sup>r</sup>]rare lordine et sapientia di Dio, che fa gire ogni cosa in tondo, a modo di cercolo. La Giesa, nel suo principio, è fiorita di questo sommo et eletto stato di viver. Hor ecco che, ancor nel fin suo (perché adesso semo vicini all'Antechristo), rinova l'esser suo aureo di prima, accioché il principio se congionga col fine, a foggia di cercolo.

O, adoncha, chi è che voglia, non dirò anterponer, ma nanche parengonare sto cernito stato di viver a qual se voglia claustral vita? Dapoi, dalla consonantia di sto so parlare, se cava una coverta biastema de Dio, et di esso Spirito Santo, come che nol possia, o non voglia [33<sup>v</sup>] più dar il suo aiuto, et vertù di viver perfettamente «et secondo la regola sua» a quelle che sparse per le case viveno, se non vanno in serra-

glie; dove, se non per amore, almancho per forza possian conservarse.

Hor ecco in que presontuose biasteme costoro caschano. Mentre che, levati da nosoche sui taciti sensi, più presto vogliono voltarse in ogni guisa, che cognosser qui lo novo invito et la nova vertù del Spirito Santo; nova et antiqua, ma adesso necessariamente renovata. Poiché, dove è la remotione delli perigoli et occasione, se scusano non poter viver secondo la regola sua. Ecco: Dio monstra ancor nel mezzo di essi lazzi dar l'aiuto et soccorso suo a chi l'ha voluto. De qui doverian pigliar [34<sup>r</sup>] causa, et novo incitamento di far bene et di glorificar la gran bontà divina. Ma più se offendeno. Et voleno quasi giudicar il Spirito Santo. Et sententiare, et vituperare le sue opere, avanti che li le cognoscano.

Il Spirito Santo chiama adesso, et invita chi vole, a viver secondo questa sorte di vita. Et gli promette una nova vertù, per il mazzor bisogno. Et chi harà ardire di negare questo? Chi vorà sententiare la vertù invisibil di Dio? Chi la po sapere, se non, a chi lè stata concessa? o a chi il Spirito di Dio la manifesta, et promette nel core?

[34<sup>v</sup>] O adoncha costoro, per farmi rebello a questo novo invito di Dio, fuor di ragione non mi voglian adesso cantar laude di ste sue clausure. Le quale ben concedo esser state et consigliate, et instituite dal Spirito Santo «sicome cose precipue et sole», ma secondo li suoi tempi. Finché fosse venuto il tempo di questa nova gratia, per la quale, (non cessando però la sua gloria, quanto in sé, di esse clausure), la persona è invitata et posta nella più bella sorte di vita che possia essere, purché capire la se voglia et possia. Né qui nesuno ha da giudicare altramente, non potendol fare leci[35<sup>r</sup>]tamente, perché prima gli converrebbe cognosserla per via di fede o di esperientia intrinseca spirituale, o esser consapevole de tutto il petto di Dio sopra ciò; come se ha ancor detto dianzi, contra la cieca presontione di coloro che hanno ardimento di dire, che questa vita non ha fondamento.

Ultimamente costoro, con sto so dire le nostre esser più nelle cose mondane, le quale imperfettioni tutte se tagliano col serarse nelli conventi, giudican temerariamente, et insiema falsamente, delle nostre vergini. Come che lor sappiano di certo che lor così sequiteno l'amore delle cose seculare, et, havendo loccasione di far male, in quella al male se tireno. Et, così tre taciti vituperii scelerati insiema [35<sup>v</sup>] habbiano costoro a commettere. Uno contra il Spirito Santo, che nol voglia o possia dar vertù di conservarse perfettamente fuora delle clausure. Laltro contra essa Ecclesia santa, come che tanta moltitudine di santi, et tante alme fiorite et cernite, sian viveste mancho perfettamente, mentreche non han schifati et venti gli pericoli, col farse serrare dentro nelle mura. Il terzo biasmo è contra la nostra Compagnia, che iniquamente la voleno giudicare che santamente non se conserve, né si perfettamente et così secondo il voler di Dio viveno, come farian serrate. Conciò sia che nella cosa, che di certo non sanno, doverian pigliarla in la meglior parte. Benché qui pono es-

ser quasi certi della nova ver[36<sup>r</sup>]tù divina, qui data et infusa, se non se lasciano più che cecare l'intelletto dalla malitia. Hor baste questo, per rispondergli a quelle sue clausure.

Vengo mo a quello, che, per sbassare meglio questa nostra vita, et inalzar più la sua, allegano quello esser privato di haver cosa propria, esser mazzor grado di perfettione che qui esser possia. A respondergli a queste sue parole, che debbo io più presto fare? havergli compassione della povera sua ignorantia? o pur adirarme contra cotale sue dannose passioni Adoncha Job richissimo, adoncha Abraham et altri patriarchi, perché haveno de proprio, son stati di menor perfectione. San Paolo [36<sup>v</sup>] egli, fatigandose, se guadagnava onde havesse a viver, et pur non lo poneva a distribuir alla discretione d'altri. Ma egli, sicome di cosa sua propria, lo dispensava. Non parlo di tanti et tante altre nella Giesa primitiva. Non di san Giosefo, non di

essa Regina del cielo.

Da questi adoncha essempii intenda, chi ha intelletto, un altissimo grado di vita, che trapassa ogni vita che di proprio non ha. Et congiongasse insiema (benché sarà difficile alle forze dell'humano intelletto, anzi impossibile, perché per la sola fede se intra a questi belli secreti) congiongase, [37<sup>r</sup>] dico, insiema il haver di proprio et il esserne spogliato totalmente, esser una medema cosa. Et de qui uscire la più bella vita che esser possia. Questo secreto ben sapeva l'Apostolo quando, potendo viver licitamente del evangelio sicome ancor altri, tutta via volse, lavorando, aquistarse il vitto, dicendo: «io so, che cosa mi è utile». Questo è un di quelli arcani de Dio, quae non licet homini loqui. Di questa vita è stata la fondatrice di questa Compagnia. In tal altissimo spirito vanno quelle, che qui veramente danno il suo nome. Taccian qui le filo[37<sup>v</sup>][so]fie humane, che niegan doi contrarii poter star insiema. Conciosiache ancor esso Nicolao Chiusa cardinale chiarissimamente demonstre ancor in esso intelletto humano quella sententia esser falsa, nonché poi in esse cose divine.

Siché costoro de qui impareno almancho a non esser così facili al scindicare le altrui vite, avantiche ben i le cognoscano, se da ignorantia questo fanno. Ma se, de malitia et invidia tocchi, parlano, ancor stuppeno la boccha, che con honor suo non potran parlare. Dove, dove maggior vertù po esser (respondami qui ognuno) astegnirse del tutto dalle cose, et viver [38<sup>r</sup>] senza quelle? o havendo le cose non haverle? star nel foco, et non essergli? Et in meggio delle cupiditadi et delicie, viver senza

delicie?

Allhora questa sua ragione valeria, quando se facesse comparatione: fra quelli che, non essendo ancor despicchati dalla totale confidenza del mondo la Giesa gli compiace haver di proprio, mentreché altramente non sono disposti a spogliarsene; et fra quelli, gli quali realmente ancor se son privati d'ogni proprio per fugire meglio l'occasione del porgli amore et speranza; et non fra quelli, che son chiamati a esser giusti dispensatori secondo il voler di Dio, ancor del suo con gran [38<sup>v</sup>] fatiga aquistato?

Questo grado di altezza di vita trapassa questa conditione di povertade, che allegano, delle religioni. Perché qui l'haver è più povero, et le ricchezze arrivano alla estremitade di essa povertade. Altramente non sareve lecito un frate della professione di san Francesco farse episcopo, o cardinale, o Papa, perché questo sareve un descender, che mai fo concesso a persona veruna.

Hor, che li Patri santi sopra ogni altra cosa habbiano havuto al petto, spenti dal Spirito Santo, la clausura, chi niega che il Spirito, sommo vero dispen[39<sup>r</sup>]sadore, secondo il bisogno delli tempi non ordene le vie et modi necessarii di viver et di po-

terse salvare? Intantoche, chi dicesse quelle vie non esser le megliore che esser possiano, peccaria. Sicome a un fanciullo chi dicesse, che'l latte non sia il più perfetto cibo che esser possia, parlareve stoltamente. Eran, eran alli suoi tempi, ottime fra tutte le altre. Ma, poiché è piaciuto a Dio, secondo il bisogno delli tempi, eccitare et nella Giesa sua piantare questa nova regola di viver, giustamente han da cedere a questa nova le altre.

[39<sup>v</sup>] Di quello, che dicono, esser concesso dalla Giesa santa ussire d'una religione, per andar in un altra et, per questo, lecitamente poterse ussire di questa per andare in un altra, credo ben che non negaranno, purché se fazza con causa, et giustamente. Hor andonca così respondiamo a questo, ma con timore, per riverentia del padre frate Agostino, il qual ancor è di questo parer, che se possa usire de questa Compagnia per andar nelli monasterii. Non chel laude questo, anzi, se allui stesse, et se potesse, molte, che ce son andate, le farebbe venir fora, per viver qui in questa bella regola, [40<sup>r</sup>] ma perché il pare che così le leggi ecclesiastice permettano.

Diciamo adoncha, che la santa Giesa ha ordenato sopra le regole di vita che erano allhora, quando se feceron quelle constitutioni, ma di questa non ha potuto sententiare cosa alcuna, perché la non gera. Et adesso, quando quella Sedia apostolica metterà il core a discuter et disponer sopra questa divina Compagnia, che cosa altra haverà da determinare il Spirito Santo che rege la Giesa, se non quello, che esso ha fabricato et ha piantato nelli cori eletti di questa regola, ciò è che illicitamente et ingiustamente abbandonano questa Compagnia, che l'abbandonan. Siché, nesuno po dire veramente che se possia levar de qui, per gir nelli monasterii, perché non pono saper il voler di Dio, se da [40] Dio non gli è manifestato. Come san, loro, che queste vergini, che egli chiama qui, nol le ordene a qualche special sua gloria, come il fece ancor de quelle di santa Orsola? Le quale, se andesseno altrove, più nol le vorìa a tal fine suo, sicome l'hareve fatto ancor delle predette vergine di essa santa Orsola? Come san loro, che questo nome di Compagnia di sant'Orsola non sia sta posto per questo solo ogietto et ragione? Come san loro, che qui il Spirito Santo non infunde, a chi veramente qui dano il so nome, tal sorte di spirito che guide alla più perfetta vita che esser possia? Come sano, finalmente, che (Dio havendo monstrato diverse [41] vie et regole di poter viver secondo il suo voler, al meglio sia possibile) questa non sia quella, che sia più conveniente a tal persona che gè intrata? anzi altrove andando non sia per esser del tutto indisposta al far bene? Perché non ogni regola convien a ogni natura.

Ma qui più non dirò; vengo a quello che dicono, che la obedientia nelli monasterii sia molto di più merito, specialmente essendo con indulgentia dalla Giesa benedetta. Qui almancho facesseno (come se dice) da boni [41<sup>v</sup>] da boni compagni fazzendo le obedienze, et nostre et sue, di eguale merito, et egualmente accette a Dio. Ma, mentre che se voleno essaltare sopra gli altri, giustamente deno esser sbassati et posti di sotto. Primo adoncha (fazzendo la cosa eguale), come hano ardire di dir questo, conciosiache così le nostre stien sotto obedienza della regola sua santa come loro? et, a fozza più nobile, et più conforme alla hierarchia celeste et terreste della Giesa santa? Da poi, se non sono più che ceccati dalla invidia, non pono lor vedere che le nostre, obedendo, dove [42<sup>r</sup>] pono far più facilmente male, havendo mazzor occasione, lì la lor obedienza è di mazzor vertù, et, per conseguente di mazzor merito?

Dapoi in questo è mirabil la obedienza: che a fozza nova et speciale Dio dà et

promette, nel core di quelli che voleno vivere sotto questa obedienza, la continua voce di Spirito Santo, alla quale di continuo habbiano a obedire nel saperse governare, stando così nel tempestuoso mare de sto seculo. La qual special gratia non è necessaria così nelli monasterii, perché di continuo sono sotto gli occhii humani

che le vedeno et custodisseno.

[42] Quanto adonque è più mirabil questa vita, la quale, stando fra il secolo più corrotto che mai fusse, tutta via viveno integre et sante, per tal special aiuto datogli divinamente. Che gli porge tanto mazzor forze, quanto da Dio mancho mediatamente venne. Et quanto di dritto gli batte il core. Il che tanto è vero, che quello stesso Spirito Santo, che opera adesso questo (perché così gli piace) nelli cori che qui se inchinan a viver, ha spento la fondatrice a poner distintamente in specialità il precetto di questo in essa regola, dicendo: Et in specialità se habbia a obedire alle inspirationi del Spirito Santo.

[43<sup>r</sup>] Il che consona con l'Apocalipse, dicendo nel quinto angelo, che in specialità pertiene a questi nostri tempi, come di commune concordia da tutti se conclude. Dice, adonque, in tal sentimento: «Io so che hai puocha vertute. Ma ecco che io te ho dato l'uscio aperto, ciò è, ti ho disposto, ad aprire il cor tuo alli ragii del Spirito Santo; dal qual essendo amaestrata et consolata, te mantenerai nel viver giusto».

Che dican che le nostre obedientie non sono confermate con tante indulgentie dal santa Giesa, et in particularitade di atti o gesti benedette come sono le sue. Questo dire [43<sup>v</sup>] più honore gli darìa, se i lo tacesseno. Primo peccano, giudicando quello che saper non pono, ciò è, che la obedientia delli monasterii più piaccia a Dio, che quella delle nostre vergini fatta in questa regola. Egli solo sa quale più gli sia grata. Dapoi ancor ingannano, et sé altri, dicendo le nostre obedientie non esser benedette dalla santa Giesa. Anzi, tanto sono benedette, quanto sono ancor da Dio, se non esteriormente, almancho intrinsichamente.

Imperoché, sicome il Padre eterno realmente le approba, et continuamente le benedice di benedicione eterna, così la santa Giesa, sempre conforme di voluntade al Padre eterno, et di continuo abbrazzan[44']do che fa la voluntà di Dio et sua, et chi fa profetto nel vero viver spirituale, col core dà eterne benedittioni a questa nostra Compagnia. Benché ancor in bolle et brievi dalla Sedia apostolica, questo ancor non sia stato publicato, per non esser ancor proposto a essa Sedia questo lume di vita, qui adesso da Dio acceso, over, perché forse ancor non è tempo da spander per meggio tale, questa nova gratia divina. Una cosa è: che, infra questo mezzo, più piace a Dio et alla Giesa l'obodedientia [sic] senza speroni fatta, et in fortezza della sola fede, che in promesse scritte et con autoritade confirmate.

[44<sup>v</sup>] Di quello, dicono, più prudentamente le monage fare, che fugono le occasioni di varii peccati, nelle quale le nostre giaceno, benché di sopra se han detto, a questo proposito, molte cose che bastar pono per risponder a tale obiettione, tutta

via ancor adesso dicemo contra ste fastidiose et inique parole.

Primo, che prosontuosamente giudicano, mentreche dalle sue parole se cavano, che, sicome le sue schifano assai peccati per esser serrate nelle mura claustrale, nelli quali lor altramente cadderian se così le occasione non havesseno fugite, così le nostre non sapolano quelli peccati, mentreche giaceno lor [45<sup>r</sup>] in essi perigoli. Il che è bugia grande.

Anzi, in tutte le cose non menor continentia, per non dir mazzore, risplende nelle nostre vergini, di quella che nelle clausure se ritrova, ancor che tutte le occasioni ce sian di peccare. Questo non ha debisogno di prova. La esperientia di chiaro lo dimostra. Nanche qui monstrano le nostre vergini menor prudentia non fugendo le occasioni; anzi mazzore, mentre che a più virile et più magnanima impresa di viver se metteno, non guidate dalla propria presontione, ma dal invito divino. Né, per questo, ancor che sian di eguale fragilitade come le altre, esse son vente dalle concupiscentie, stando fra tante occasio[45] ne de assai mali, et quasi essendo poste nel mezzo dello inferno di tanti scandali et corrottele secularesche.

Imperoché Dio chiamandole a maggiori perigoli, et lor consentendo alla vocatione celeste, gli dà ancor mazzor vertù; percioché Dio non chiama a una vita, se non dà ancor le forze sufficiente di mantenerse et poter perseverare in essa. Questo di chiaro se manifesta in quelli che, guidati dal Spirito Santo, intran nelli deserti. Siché le nostre vergini, per questa nova vertù concessagli da Dio per haver consentuto a viver sotto questa regola, tanto facilmente et più ancora se conservaranno, et venzeranno gli perigoli, ne mezzo delli quali lor stanno, quanto quelle che, fugendo esse occasioni, serrate et chiuse [46] fra le mura viveno. Anzi, tanto più la conditione nostra è maggiore, quanto più gloriosa cosa è venzer più forte nemigo. Hor ecco, come dapertutto costoro, mentreche se sforzano de svilirne, più dan causa che'l precio nostro se manifeste, et, pensando di sbassarne, più al suo dispetto ne inalzan.

Dio adoncha, Dio, qui adesso promette et dà quella forza, quella signoril vertute nelli petti delle nostre vergini, che già il dava a sant'Orsola, a santa Agnese, a santa Tecla, a santa Cecilia, et quelle altre generose vergini della primitiva Giesa. Dio, dico, per meggio della sua mi[46<sup>v</sup>]nistra et embasiatrice ha acceso qui, in questa nostra Compagnia, quello novo spirito.

Ultimamente, che alcune, per trarse di sotto da questa forza di vita sotto qualche colore, che alcune, dico, dican che gli bastan a servire, et che, andando nelli monasterii, non se vanno fuor di Dio, anzi in logi et vie ordenate dal Spirito Santo, queste son parole non a tempo dette (come ancor di sopra se ha mostrato) et torte, allegate più presto in favor della propria voluntade, che di quella di Dio. Chi non sa che il basta, [47<sup>r</sup>] purché se serve a Dio? Ma però intendase bene, ciò è purché 'l se fazze veramente et giustamente. Veramente, con sincerità di core, mosse solamente dal Spirito Santo et non da propria voluntade. Non per propria mazzor commoditate corporale. Non per fugir le tribulationi et le cause del patire. Giustamente, col far così che, se Dio haverà chiamato per una via, la se voglia cognossere. Nanche voler più presto elezzersene una a proprio parere, specialmente nascendo de qui conturbo di esse proprie sorelle, et scandali di tristezza. Questo servire a Dio a questa fozza, è un esser nemigo de Dio. Un commover l'ira sua grande. [47<sup>v</sup>] Onde egli terribilmente a tali, che le vie sue non accettano, minazza per il profeta dicendo: «Ipsi vero non cognoverunt vias meas, quibus iuravi in ira mea, si introibunt in requiem meam», ciò è: essi non han cognossute le mie vie, alli quali ho giurato nellira mia che non intraranno nello mio riposo.

Siché il servir a Dio così è un desservirlo. El gir monache a sto modo, è un gir hypocrite. Un andar immascherate. Di fuora haver l'habito di esser mortificate, et di esser spose di Jesu Christo. Ma di dentro [48<sup>r</sup>] esser piene di proprie voglie, esser spose dello proprio appetito, del proprio spirito, o di quello diabolico, se tal ce harà spento, o di fora, o di dentro. Esser finalmente legate col capo d'ogni superbia, mentreche se ha fatto più cunto del proprio parere et proprio consiglio, che di quello di Dio.

Onde non sarà maraviglia, se Dio contra tale dirà quelle parole: «Despexistis om-

ne consilium meum. Et ego in interitu vestro ridebo», ciò è: havete sprezzato ogni mio consiglio. Et io ancor me riderò de voi, nella roina vostra. [48<sup>v</sup>] Et altrove dice Dio nella Scrittura sua, che non per altro il suo popolo è gito in roina se non perché no l'ha cognosciuto, il giorno che Dio il visitava. Non ha appreciato le vie sue mostrate. Imperoché Dio, per diversi tempi, nelli ultimi bisogni sempre soccorre al mondo per qualche novo modo, poiché gli vecchii puocho giovan, essendo venuti in scandalo per la mazzor parte. Et necessario è che tutte le vie di Dio habbian logo. Et che sian piantate per qualche suo gran ministro.

Era questa rego[49<sup>r</sup>]la ab eterno nel petto del Altissimo; mai il la eccitata, né inspirata, se non adesso, nelli tempi del precursore del Antechristo. Tanto essendo più mirabile, quanto è vero che gli maggior rimedii se lassano sempre al fine, dove la infirmitade è più grave. Et quanto è vero che, secondo che se va più inanzi, tanto più Dio manifesta di mazzori secreti della sapentia sua. Manchava questa di viver regola alla Giesa santa. Nella quale adesso, nelli [49<sup>v</sup>] ultimi bisogni, respira, sicome d'un tra i più belli doni, che mai Dio al mondo donasse.

Intreno adonca, intreno in questa fede di vita. Et così prima la cognoscano. Perché a tal bella noticia non se intra se non per via di fede. Et poiché l'haran cogno-

sciuta, così poi la giudicheno, se voleno esser giudici boni et giusti.

Intreno, dico et sbasseno gli cori alla fede di tanta fortezza di vita. Et vederanno, più chiaro del sole, questo esser quel modello di vita quale Jesu Christo, ussendo dal sino del Patre, portò dal Cielo. Et la volse correre. Qual gli suoi [50<sup>r</sup>] Apostoli sequirno. Qual gli martiri. Qual tante belle vergini nella primitiva Giesa. «Et sopratutto la Madonna» Questa è quella che così è attiva, che però sempre con la mente stie nel Cielo.

Così han di proprio, che però lo pongan in discretione de chi le governan; overo, per la perfetta mortificatione et totale annihilatione di se stesse, lo distribuisseno tanto a sé come ad altri, non sicome suo proprio, ma sicomo di Dio; di continuo secondo il voler suo lo dispensa. Tanto pronte a contentarse non havendone, come, havendone, pronte [50<sup>v</sup>] a fare secondo gli consiglii del Spirito Santo, che in specialitade governa tale anime.

Così sono nelli fastidii et impazzi humani, che però non abbandonen la serenitade nella quale viveno pendendo di continuo dal sereno aiuto et consolatione del Spirito Santo. Et mentreche tutto ricievono sicome porgesto dalla man divina, volentiera lo beveno. Et quella bevanda amara se gli converte in dolcezza celeste.

Et così, stando nel mezzo del mondo et di essa vita attiva, gustan della contemplativa. Et a fozza mirabile vive[51] no congiontamente in l'una et l'altra. L'altezza della contemplatione non leva le fazzende, né le fazzende impedissen il gusto celeste. Né la luce celeste toglie le opere.

Così gli apostoli, tanti altri martiri, et vergine, et confessori, nel mezzo delle fazzende, che per il solo et pur amor divino favano, di mazzor altezza eran in Dio che mai forno altri, che, espediti dalli impazzi humani, alla sola contemplatione se davano.

Tal vita è questa Compagnia. Di tal sorte era la fondatrice. Apostola nova è stata quella celeste vergine, alli tempi nostri corrottissimi.

[51<sup>v</sup>] Ma adesso non è logo dir delle stupende laude di essa matre fondatrice. Per hora baste così in fretta et quasi correndo, et a volta per volta impedito da altre oc-

cupationi, baste dico per adesso talmente haver risposto alle fastidiose lingue, al-

mancho, se non sono inique.

Voi madonne, et tutte altre governatrici, state su la guardia, che tal voci fuor di tempo et di ragione non nociano al vostro grege, che Dio ve ha dato nelle mani. Et con questi, et altri megliori modi, che la prudentia vostra [52<sup>r</sup>] et il Spirito Santo in specialitade ve porrà avanti gli occhii, fate resistentia con sommo sforzo, a così fatti ciffoli venenati. Nanche vogliate da ragioni apparente, et che paiano haver del verisimile, lassarve imbeverare, et sotto specie di bene guidar voi, con la Compagnia, in roina et precipitio. Né mai commettiate che'l precio, et suo honore della Compagnia, et di essa Fondatrice, un quancho se sminuisca, per tanto quanto mai potreti [52<sup>v</sup>], con tutte le forze vostre et corporale et spirituale, come a questo ve constrenze ogni debito di giusticia. Perché ancor qui consiste ogni vostro bene et gloria in ciel et in terra. Rimanete in pace.

Laus Deo et sanctae Matri suae. Amen.

## 24. Dichiarazione della Bolla

Città del Vaticano, Archivio Segreto Vaticano, S.C.Rit. Processus 341, ff. 969r-983r.

[Dichiarazione della Bolla del papa Paolo Terzo]

Gabriele Cozzano, per voluntà de Iddio, quantunque indegno, Cancellier della reverenda Madre madonna Angela, fondatrice della Regola di Vergine detta la Compagnia di Sant'Orsola, et eletto protettore di quelle, alla nobel matrona madonna Genevra Luciaga et a essa Compagnia.

Pur finalmente letta et riletta havemo la tanto bramata Bolla, nella quale il sommo Padre nostro aprisce verso sta sacra Compagnia tutte le viscere della gran bontade del cor suo liberalis[969<sup>v</sup>]simo. Et con sì gran giubilo d'allegrezza l'havemo vista, come si esso vivo fonte d'ogni benignitade qui hora dal Ciel fusse disceso. Imperoché hoggi tanta abundantia di liberalitade apostolica ha sparso il Padre Santo sopra sta nostra schietta, reale, et angelica Compagnia, quanta più domandare a pena potevano. Allegriamose adonque tutti di siema; giubilemo, et nelli cori nostri essultemo, gittando d'ogni intorno gaudiose et festive voci.

Io sapeva ben, io, che, essendo questa Regola di vita piantata et introdotta nella gran forza et eterna vertù del figlio d'Iddio, il Vicario suo non doveva, né poteva, se non eternalmente confirmar quello che dall'eterno suo Signore era venuto. Nanche era possibile che la mediatrice di tanto bene (la quale, essendo in se stessa, in fortezza di fede, a foggia mirabile annichilata, non poteva haver se non mirabilmente il Spirito Divino et Santo che di continuo singularmente la reggeva, illuminava, et infiammava) non impetrasse di facile dal Sposo immaculato ciò che ella voleva, essen-

do il voler suo il stesso che quello del Figliuol di Iddio.

Il qual tante fiade da lei, non in spirito humano, né in spirito di fallacia et vanitade, ma in fortezza di Spirito Santo, detto era il suo Amatore, intanto quella generosa et sublime Alma era con Dio in amore legata. Festeggiemo un altra fiada, dico; canti et varii soni risoneno d'ogni intorno. Cante ognuno, chi «Iubilate Deo omnis Terra», chi, «Cantate Domino canticum novum, laus ejus in Ecclesia [970<sup>r</sup>] Sanctorum». Un altro faccia ribombare: «Exultet caelum laudibus, resultet terra gaudiis». Non sia nella Divina Scrittura cantico allegro alcuno, che hora non sia cantato in laude del Figliuol di Dio, il qual solo è mirabile nel-

le sue opere, et gloriosamente magnificato, et sopra essaltato.

Che mo farà qui Lucifero con gli suoi membri e seguaci? Che farallo, dico, il gran pazzo? il qual con tanto prosontuoso ardire si pensava o di destruere, o a suo modo contrafare tal sacra regola, et quello, ch'l Spirito Santo haveva piantato et ordenato sperava ancor come (hic recentiori calamo suprapositum est: si tiene) maggior di Iddio, o egli saperlo meglio a sua voglia disponerlo, o poterlo destruggerlo del tutto. Come che essa vera potentia et sapientia meglio in lui stesso, che nella fondatrice nata fusse. Ma adesso come se ritrovarallo egli, et tutta la sua possanza terrena, aerea et infernale? Quando di chiaro vederà che l'apostolica Sedia, la cui potestà in terra è la stessa che quella della somma Trinitade in Cielo, harà approbato nella sapientia del Figlio, harà fortificato nella vertù del Spirito Santo, harà con decreto stabilito nella possanza del Padre questa sacra et divinamente piantata Compagnia, et le di lei fatte sapientissimamente regole et ordinationi?

Qui vento, non vorà egli forse esser vento? et atterrato, harà egli ancor ardir di rilevarsi? Et un altra fiada volerla con Dio braveggiare? et dir, sgonfio di superbia: «In caelum ascendam, super astra caeli exaltabo solium meum, et ero similis Altissi-

mo»?

Ecco la infiata bestia ancor minaccia di appararsi a Dio. Come che, se Iddio nel mondo Compagnia alcuna [970<sup>v</sup>] di vita spirituale et secondo la vera sapientia sua ha ordenato, et secondo la vera vertù ha piantato, et secondo la eterna sua possanza ha stabilito, così ancor egli, a foggia di simiotto, nella sua sgonfia scientia et suo falso spirito et vana possanza, tenta d'introdurre la Sinagoga de suoi spirituali. Anzi (il che è atto ancor più prosontuoso et temerario) gl'ordini et le vie di Iddio egli, sì come (*hic pariter recentiori calamo suprapositum fuit: stimasi*) più savio, ha ardire di cangiarle, di alterarle, et di novo, secondo il proprio spirito et parere, del tutto farle. Et cerca di far parere alle semplice et inavvedute anime che ancor esso Dio, ancor essa divina Scrittura, ancor esso Vicario del Figliol di Iddio, a questo se inchine come a cosa debita. Et in questo gli serve, come che il concetto suo sia degno, al qual fin esso Dio se gli inchine.

O un altra fiada bruttissima et mostruosa fiera, usa pur tutti gli artiglii quanto ti piace, che poi il Leone della tribù di Giuda sempre ha la vittoria, sempre te ha vento, te vince, et sempre ti vincerà nell'amica del Figliol di Dio, in vertù del Sangue del quale ella ha conceputa sta sacra Compagnia l'ha partorita, l'ha nodrita et con-

servata, et sempre la conservarà fin che'l mondo durerà. Amen.

Spiegemo dunque ancor tutte le viscere di cuori nostri in allegrezze nove et giubilose. Ogni persona se concorde a solazzare in Dio, donne, huomini, vecchii, giovani, sacri, non sacri, et spetialmente le sacre verginelle allegre et giubilose facciano d'ogni [971'] banda risonare: «Gloria Patri, et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto, sicut era in principio, et nunc, et semper, et in saecula saeculorum Amen». Peccato è hora a non far festa in tanta benignitade del Signor Nostro, che credo fin gl'Angeli et tutto il Paradiso se ne gode. Anzi, senza dubio ogni Spirito di quella beata patria hora solazza et tripudia, solazza la Regina del Cielo, festeggian gli Patriarchi, trionfan gli Apostoli, giubilan li Martiri, essultano gli Confessori, tripudian gli Dottori.

Hor le Vergini, et spetialmente la vittoriosa S. Orsola con la sua gloriosa Compagnia, et santa Caterina generosa, hora cantano più efficacemente quel suo novo cantico, che a lor sole è concesso di cantare, et a lor, cantando, tutte le Gierarchie celesti concordevolmente rispondendo, intonano: «Benedetto sia quello, che siede sopra il throno, throno candido et aurato. Amen per tutti gli secoli».

Proemio nella tradottione della Bolla papale in confirmatione della Regola et Compagnia di S. Orsola.

Senza, madonna Genevra, che con voce mi manifestati il vostro desio di cognoscere, et voi stessa poter leggere la Bolla che ne ha concesso il Signor nostro, io già l'ho compreso, et subito mi son messo per sodisfarvi a tradorla di latino in volgare. Nel fare la qual cosa non sempre l'ho interpretata de parola per parola, il che sareve stato cosa troppo mal agevole, et, a certa foggia, fatta harei un interpretatione mostruosa et fortemente insolita. Specialmente che in queste bolle intraviene che, tra due voci che insiema se hanno a congiongere, una schiera di molte altre saranno intraposte. Il qual modo et foggia di dire, se nella tradottio[971] ne volgare havesse servato, né so che cosa oscura, insolita et dispiacevole hareve ripresentato. Ma ben sappiate, che niente della integritade dell'inviolabile senso (il che sacrilegio grave sareve) ho cangiato. Ma fidelissimamente tutto l'ho servato. Hor, accioché chiaramente et di facile possiate ben intendere il tutto che si ve conviene, io vi vo fare una magistrevole et chiara divisione.

Adonque essa Bolla ha quatro parti principale: ha la prefatione, la petitione, la concessione, ha la conclusione. Et quello che se contiene in una, è ancor in l'altra, ma a varie foggie. Imperoché nella prefatione, over proemio, è virtualmente tutto quello che espressamente et largamente dice la concessione, et quello che brievamente et distintamente conclude l'epilogo, et ancor quello che specificamente domanda la sopplicatione. Et così la cosa vene a esser semplice, et una, et con proportione di correspondentia detta, et in niente una parte esser disconforme dall'altra.

Questo dico accioché di chiaro sappiate quanto male fanno quelli che sforzano la lettera della Bolla, che dica quello che a nulla foggia lo dice, né dee, né lo po dire. Parlo di quello: che voleno, ogni modo, che'l Pontefice habbia concesso et data licentia di alterare, cangiare et far di novo esse ordinatione et documenti della Regola, già qui dalla episcopal Sedia comprobati. Cosa sacrilega pur da pensarlo.

### [972<sup>r</sup>] Dichiaratione della prima parte, o Prologo della Bolla.

Hor primo, adunque, il Santo Padre nostro manda inanzi un brieve et chiaro prologetto, a foggia d'un dolce et bello anticanto, nel quale con amorevole attentione conforta gli virginei animi a sperare dalla sua promptissima liberalitade ogni bramata gratia giusta. Et quatro cose dice. Primo parla del suo grado, sicome divinamente è fatto presidente sopra il governo di tutta la Chiesa. Da poi dice come, havendo spetial affettione alle vergine, è speronato a contentar li pii lor et celesti desiderii. Terzo dice come ha cura grande che gli buoni ordini, che in honor del culto divino sono prodotti, sempre stiano illibati. Finalmente promette di fare ancor altre sovra ciò salutevole provisione.

Ma avanti questo proemio ne mette un altro piccolino, drizzato alli Protettori, che Sua Santità ne dà. Benché non so a che fine dalle nostre Madonne richiesto sia il Vescovo veronese per Protettore, rifiutata la Sedia nostra episcopale, che tanto ne è stata favorevole; che questo l'hanno fatto ingiustamente et con malitia, senza chieder il consiglio et consenso. Hor sto proemietto così in nostro lenguazo sona.

#### Tradottione del prologhetto delli Protettori.

Paolo Vescovo Servo delli Servi di Dio, al venerabile fratel nostro Vescovo veronese, et alli diletti figli l'Archidiacono et l'Arciprete della Chiesa bresciana, la salute et apostolica Benedittione. Hoggi da noi uscite sono cotali lettere che qui sotto seguono.

#### Tradottione del proemio della gratia richiesta.

Paolo Vescovo Servo di Servi di Dio, a perpetua memoria della [972] cosa. Essendo Noi (perché così il Signore ha ordinato) posti sopra il regimento della universal Chiesa, che ben nol meritavamo, astretti et spronati siamo da continui et solleciti pensieri, accioché (secondo l'ufficio della dispensatione, che n'è stata data nelle mani, et alla fede nostra commessa) far se possia salutevole provisione (per quanto divinamente ne è concesso) alli tocchi di vera pietade, et salutiferi disii di qualonque persona, a una per una, che con la purità di vita vanno assomigliando l'immaculato Agnello, et spetialmente di quelle del sesso feminile, le quali, sprezzata compagnia et nozze di huomo mortale, son sollecite, et attendono con intentione et mente celeste, realmente et in atto, la castità et virginità mondare; le quali vergini, in verità, quando prosperano ne danno ristoro.

Et ancor, quando ne è richiesta, aggiungemo la soda forza dell'apostolica fortificatione a quelle cose, le quali per cotale salubre virginea vita ritroviamo esser uscite a laude et gloria del culto divino, accioché sempre di fermo stiano immutabili; et oltra di questo facciamo sopra ciò altre provisioni, sicome nel Signore vediamo esser

utile et salutevole.

### Dichiaratione della seconda parte della Bolla, che è la supplica o petitione.

La parte seconda, che è la supplicatione, contiene due cose principale. La prima parla del modo dell'haver piantata la regola et Compagnia; [973'] la seconda contie-

ne quello che se domanda.

Hor la prima un altra fiada se diparte in tre cose. La prima è: come alcune vergine, inspirate divinamente, hanno piantata questa Compagnia. La seconda: come, per governare essa congregatione, hanno fatta certa Regola. La terza è: come tal Regola è stata confirmata dalla Episcopal Sedia. Hor la seconda principal parte ne ha sotto a sé altre due. La prima: come se supplica che tal Compagnia et Regola sia, con la soda forza ancor dell'apostolica Sedia, fortificata. La seconda: come fare voglia ancor altre opportune provisioni, le quale sono cinque, sicome qui sotto nella concessione se vederà.

Hor mirate come ancor qui, sicome per l'altra parte della Bolla, chiarissimamente se monstra che l'apostolica Sedia vuole che la Regola non se possia alterare, ma sempre stie incommutabile, mentre che se chiede che, alla episcopale confirmatione, ancor se aggionga la fortezza pontificia, anzi esso stabilimento dell'esser sostantiale; la qual parola, ben notaretila che debatte ste false et sforzate interpretationi.

Tradottione della prima principal parte della sopplica.

Hor di fresco n'è stata offerta una domanda, da parte delli diletti figlioli moderni Governatori et Governatrici della fradellanza delle vergine sotto l'invocatione di

sant'Orsola, che nella cittade di Brescia regolarmente è stata introdotta.

La qual domanda contineva che altre volte furono alcune giovinette et altre donne (cioè vergine, non giovane, ma attempate et esperte) le quali, havendo conculcati et spenti gli diletti et piaceri mondani, et havendo sprezzato l'amore et compagnia [973<sup>v</sup>] di homo mortale, mentre che, tocche et accese del Divino Spirito, bramano con la eterna virginità, et con odore di bona fama, far grato sacrificio all'Altissimo nelli beneplaciti di colui che bellissimo sovra gli figlioli delli homini; et mentre che bramano di attendere alla perfettione della carità et ad altre opere pie, esse hanno ordinata et instituita la predetta Compagnia. Et, per il salutevole regimento loro et bono accrescimento, hanno fatto alcuni ordini et leggi. Le quale ordinationi poi, et statuti, veduti et ben letti sono dal Vescovo bresciano, over dal suo generale Vicario nelle cose spirituale, havendo per ciò (come egli affermava) dallo stesso Vescovo speciale podestade, in vigore della quale esso Vicario, con quella ordinaria autoritade, ha confermato et approvato i detti statuti et ordinationi, come si dice meglio contenerse nelle patente lettere di esso Vescovo over Vicario, et altri documenti publici sovra ciò fatti.

#### Dechiaratione della prima principal parte della sopplicatione.

Io, et un Canonico Dottore che se chiamava il Dusina, tutti dui fussimo quelli che la presentassimo al Vicario, che detto era Lorenzo Mutio; il qual, nel leggerla, con stupore spesso diceva (così m'arricordo): è fatta con gran sentimento. Il notaro che gli pose il sigillo fu quello che se dice il Boarno. Fu scritta di mia mano propria, et tutta la compositione fu mia. Ma gli sensi furono del Spirito Santo, dittati per via della Fondatrice.

Hor sia noto a ogni perso[974']na come, sovra quelle giovinette et quelle altre donne, delle quale la Bolla parla, la cosa fu così, sicome ancor voi poteti ben sapere, o madonna Genevra. Eran molte vergine che furon le primitie del Spirito Santo in questa fratellanza, et come tante scintille fra le tenebre del mondo. Le giovenette eran Simona, le putte di Dolza Drusilla, Laura, Andriana, Peregrina, et altre. C'eran ancor le Peschere, madonna Chiara Gaffurra. Le più attempate Barbara, Chiara, Margarita, Maria. Tra le quale era la più vecchia et santa la reverenda Madre Angela. Anzi, ella fra loro tutte era come un sole che tutte le altre illuminava. Era come un fuogho et incendio d'amore che le infiammava. Era come un throno di Dio, che le ammaestrava; anzi, in lei il Figlio di Dio sedendo, il tutto con lei fazzeva. Ella sola, divinamente inspirata, è stata la fondatrice di tant'opra. Ella la vera et viva matre, che nel Verbo di veritade et nel Sangue di Giesù Christo le ha generate et regenerate. Ma in una epistola proemiale che ella mi fe fare, volse esser posta fra il commun numero, et il suo nome da mi esser tacciuto per causa di humilitade, o forse ancor per altri rispetti et cause che stanno ascose nei divini secreti.

A queste vergini quello che essa ad altri communicava, gli impetrava, et dava la sofficientia di fare. Poi con loro di ciò se consultava, et le essortava a fare, et diceva, non sé, ma loro con lei haverlo fatto. Gli restava obligatissima fazzendose vera debitrice, et dandogli Dio per remuneratore potente, sicome vera amica et viva figlia di Dio, il qual ciò ch'egli fa nell'homo col consenso suo, lo remunera [974] come che

esso solo l'havesse fatto. Come ecco una fiada ella mi disse, come io solo con lei havevamo fatto questa Regola; et con tutto ciò non ce ne ho niente del mio, eccetto un pochetto di ministero di scriver fidelmente quanto posso i suoi sacri sensi, et documenti.

Era di tanta gratitudine et gentilezza, che chi gli fava pur un servicietto di cuore, gli pareva non poter mai remunerare con atto cortese. Dio, diceva, sia quello che il tutto rimunere. Era di tanta caritade et unione con Dio, che se fava vera debitrice d'ogni creatura che vivesse in cunto alcuno costumatamente et giustamente, secondo Dio. Perché tutto l'honore et il rispetto che era havuto a Dio, lo riputava esser fatto a se stessa, essendo Dio suo, et il suo solo Amore et Bene. Era di tanta sete, et brama della salute et ben del prossimo, che era disposta et prontissima a poner verazamente non una, ma mille vite, se tante la ne havesse havute, per la salute ancor d'un minimo. Tanta era quella caritade, che toccava dal Ciel fin all'inferno. Con amor materno abbrazzava ogni creatura. Et chi era il più peccatore, quello era il più carezzato da lei; che, se convertirlo nol poteva, almanco con dolcezza d'amore lo induceva a far qualche bene, o far manco male. Diceva, così quelli esser per haver nella morte almanco qualche refrigerio per quello pochetto di bene, et nell'inferno manco di tormento. Eran quelle sue parole affocate, potente, et dolce, et dette con tal novo [975<sup>r</sup>] vigore di gratia, che ben ognun poteva esser constretto a dire: Quivi è Dio. Ma qui non è il luogho di narrare la gloria delle mirabil opre di Dio in questa Vergine. O chi sapesse in che fortezza di Spirito ella, tocca divinamente fin da giovinetta, ha conceputa sta real Compagnia, et poi, al suo tempo, comandata da Dio, l'ha partorita et piantata, forse altro rispetto et maggior riverentia il mondo hareve alli suoi degni et irreprensibili ordini et documenti.

Ma proseguiamo il testo della Bolla.

#### Tradottione della seconda parte principale della dimanda.

Per la qual cosa, da parte di esse persone Governatrici humilmente ne è stato sopplicato che se dignassimo dell'apostolica cortesia sodamente invigorire, col fortificamento dell'apostolica Sedia cotale fondatione di fratellanza, et cotali leggi et ordinationi, accioché quella regola di vita habbia sotto sé fondamento più fermo di sostantiale essere. Et ancor se dignassimo di fare ad altri modi, intorno alle cose inanzi dette, opportune provisioni.

### Dichiaratione della concessione, la terza parte principale della Bolla.

Poiché il Santo Patre ha così narrato la sostantia della sopplica, slarga il seno dell'apostolica pienezza a conceder ciò che giustamente chieder se ha potuto; et in sta parte sette cose fa. Primo, dice come volontiera consente a conceder tal domanda. Da poi, absolve le persone Governatrice da ogni impedimento, se alcun ce fusse a ottegnire l'effetto della presente [975<sup>v</sup>] gratia concessa. Terzo, stabilisce con eterno decreto la Regola et essa Compagnia. Quarto, sopplisce gli defetti, se alcuno sarà intravenuto. Quinto, dà licentia di cangiar altre costitutioni che sian fatte circa il regimento, et farne delle altre, et quelle ancor mutarle et farle di novo; le quali così fatte le conferma. Sesto, che tutti i lassi fatti sotto certa conditione a esse vergine non possian andar altrove. Settimo, che, intrando et morendo, sempre habbino la indulgenza plenaria.

#### Tradottione della concessione.

Noi adonque, li quali volontieri (per quanto possiamo) consentiamo a quelli desii onde se spera la salute dell'anime procedere, primieramente, per il contesto di queste nostre, assolviamo, et esser assoluti giudichiamo gli predetti Governatori et Governatrice, et ciaschuno per uno et tutti insiema da qualonque sententie ecclesiastiche, censure, et pene di escommunicatione, di sospensione, et di interdetto, et da altre ancor sententie, se in alcuna di quelle in qualonque foggia annodati sono, le quali punitioni date lor fosseno, per qualonque si voglia causa et occasione, o sia da homo, o sia da ragione. Solamente però, vogliamo lor così esser assolti, affinché possiano ottegnire l'intento delle presenti lettere nostre.

#### Dechiaratione della prima e seconda parte della concessione.

Qui noteno bene le nostre innovatrice le quale se pensano ciò che per fente [976<sup>r</sup>] et false suppliche havesseno impetrato, fosse stato per esser valido, che la Sedia apostolica consente non a ogni volere, ma solamente a quello onde crede esser per nascerne la salute delle anime. Imperoché tal Sedia niente assolutamente concede, ma con conditione se l'è giusto, come fo narrato, et con presupposito che sia augmento di fede, di pace et concordia nella Chiesa, altramente nulla è cotale impetratione.

Noteno ancor, et ben noteno, che, se per lor soppliche questa assolutione è concessa, accioché così venesseno a esser libere dall'interdetto episcopale, et comandamento contra quella sua novitade iniusta, nulla gli giovarà tal assolutione, anzi più presto gli nocerà, et incorreranno insiema ancor nell'ira dell'omnipotente Iddio, e dello sdegno apostolico. Primo, perché quella scommunicatione, o comandamento episcopale, fo fatto necessariamente per sollevare le vergine iniustamente oppresse; da poi, ancor conseguentemente, per conservatione della ordinatione della Regola, la quale non admette così fatta novitade. Finalmente, per conseguire ancor lo effetto della presente Bolla papale, la quale con decreto stabilisce essa Regola et tutto quello al qual'ella ha risguardo.

Sì che ste nostre innovatrici, stando ostinate in non voler obedire alla Sedia episcopale, in non cessare de contristare le vergine che viveno irreprensibilmente, et credendose di esser assolte di ciò dalla [976<sup>v</sup>] pontificia gratia, faranno che saranno poi illaqueate in l'una et l'altra maledittione, et così non haranno logo di defensione

né in Ciel, né in terra.

E possibile che non possian lassare quella sua iniusta voglia una fiada presa? Non vedeno, se almanco veder pono di chiaro, che quella persona che giustamente è deredata et scommunicata, impetrando poi ingiustamente l'assolutione et liberatione da tal nodo, non solamente non sarà sciolto, ma ancora se gli crescerà il peccato, mentre che mentisce et se crede de ingannare la Sedia sacra a fargli ingiusta gratia?

### Tradottione della terza parte della concessione.

Da poi, essendo inchinati a cotali soppliche, mentre che per le nostre presenti havemo come espressi gli più veri tenori delle lettere et predetti documenti, la institutione della fratellanza, et cotali leggi et ordinationi; et parimente comprendendo risguardano al modo che quelle concernono, tutte le cose insieme et ciascuna per

sé, che in ciò et nelle lettere et nelli predetti documenti si contiengono, et che da indi son seguite (mentre però siano lecite et honeste, et alli sacri Canoni non contrarie): tutte insieme queste cose, et ciaschuna per sé, Noi, di certa scientia et della pienezza dell'apostolica possanza, per lo tenore delle presente lettere, di autorità apostolica le approviamo et confirmiamo, et a quelle aggiungemo la soda forza di perpetua fermezza. Et deliberatamente con decreto provediamo che esse le debbano fermamente esser osser[977] vate nell'avenire di continuo per tutti li tempi.

## Dichiaratione della terza parte della concessione.

Ecco il punto, ecco quel che più importava, et sovra ogn'altra dimanda era desiderabile: che questa nova Regola di vita, essendo venuta dall'eterno Dio, con tutta

la possanza del Vicario suo eternalmente fosse stabilita.

Imperoché è triplici munimine cincta, non altramente come se dal Ciel discesa fusse la sapientia del Figlio, mentre che dice: l'approbemo; la fortezza dello Spirito Santo quando dice: gli aggiongemo la soda forza; la possanza del Padre quando dice: con decreto provedemo a dargli cosifatto stabilimento. Imperoché in terra la Sedia apostolica ha l'autoritade che ha in Cielo la Somma Trinitade. Et sappiate, havendo il Pontefice con decreto così confermato la Regola, la natura del decreto è questa: che annulla ciò che è fatto in contrario, o è per farsi.

Adonque ste novitadi van per terra; et chi se sforzano di introdorle ogni modo, andando contro la Bolla, cascan in quello che la Bolla minaccia. Siano ben qui accorte, et non siano le nostre innovatrice ingeniose a ingannar sé ed altri. Tanto, dico, è stabilita sta nova Regola di vita, quanto è qualonque altra religiosa vita; quanto è il firmamento del Cielo. È stabilita, dico, così nella Giesa dalla potestade ecclesiastica, perché già era di prima eternalmente da Dio predetta et suscitata; sì come la Chiesa canonizarà un Santo [977] nel mondo, non perché quella canonizazione lo fazza Santo, se nol fosse Santo di prima; ma perché è già Santo di Dio, et da Dio fatto, la Ecclesia al mondo questo dechiara et lo conferma.

Confondasi qui adonque ogni iniqua possanza terrena, aerea et infernale, et in sé cruciata consumase, poiché più non haverà dove il tacito velen suo qui essercitar possia. Hor, fatto questo eterno stabilimento, il Santo Padre sparge subito un altro

bell'atto di liberalitade apostolica, et dice così:

## Tradottione della quarta parte della concessione.

Et se forse fusseno intravenuti alcuni mancamenti di ragione et di fatto nelle medesime cose, tutti insieme, et ciascuno per sé li soppliamo.

#### Dichiaratione.

Dice che sopplisce li defetti della ragion et del fatto, se ce sono intravenuti. Non intendiate però che, se fusse introdotta una cosa iniusta et contro gli Canoni, per questo la deba et possia stare; anzi levarla subito la se doverìa. Ma se intende: quando se è fatta una cosa bona in sé, ma però la legge deveda che senza licentia se fazza per molti rispetti, et non se sa di quella legge, quella è ignorantia di ragione. All'opposito: quando se sa la legge et il devedo, et quando se fa qualche cosa contro quella, la quale però non se tiene esser contra quella, è ignorantia di fatto.

Come ecco: la Giesa deveda che (eccetto le Religioni) nessuna persona faccia publicamente voto in Chiesa in man del Sacerdote. [978] Se alcuna delle nostre l'ha fatto non sapendo sto punto di ragione, tal mancamento di ragione il Padre Santo lo sopplisce, cioè vole che sia come non se havesse fatto contro lo interdetto, et come se havesse havuto licentia di farlo. All'opposito se alcuna, sapendo tal devedo della Chiesa, et giurasse nelle mani del Sacerdote di servare virginitade ascosamente senza saputa di altri, et pensasse quello suo atto esser compreso nell'interditto ecclesiastico, quella incorrerebbe nel mancamento del fatto. Sicome se uno, portando delle balotte adosso, non se credesse portar arme contra lo editto fatto che nessuno portasse arme.

Dice adonque il Santo Padre: se alcuno cotale difetto intravenuto, che'l lo leva; intravenuto, dice, nelle cose della Regola approbata dalla Sedia episcopale. Et dice: che sono intravenute; non dice: che intraveneranno. Nanche dice: che fusseno intravenute nelli altri ordini che da poi sono stati fatti, né ne intravenisseno in quelli

che sono per esser fatti. In questi non fa sta soppletione, come pare.

Sappiate ancora che, cosa male fatta, quando è saputa non è più da farsi, altrimente si peccarebbe con malitia; et tal circostanza fa che perdono non merita. Peroché chi pecca con questa mente, che gli sia poi perdonato, leva la causa del perdono.

## Tradottione della quinta parte della concessione.

Et, parimente, concediamo alla fratellanza et a suoi Governatori et Governatrici che hora et secondo il tempo sono, che possiano ag[978<sup>v</sup>]giungere tutti gl'altri statuti et ordinationi, lecite però et honeste, così intorno al reggimento et stato pacifico et tranquillo della fratellanza delle vergini, come intorno il lor numero qualità et

età, et ancor farne degl'altri.

Et possiano, et le fatte (come par si dimostri) cotali costitutioni et ordinamenti, alterarli, cangiarli, et di novo farli; i quali, poi che alterati, cangiati et di novo fatti saranno, subito in ciò, per la stessa apostolica autoritade, confermati siano; habbiansi a giudicare così essere, et per tali habbiansi a tenere; et possiano mettere qualonque pena contro coloro che contra li faranno, senza ricercare a guisa niuna la licenza del Diocesano del luogho.

#### Dechiaratione.

Questa gratia et aggionta che hora il Signor nostro ne dà, gli è stata richiesta non di commune saputa né consenso, ma ascosamente et con malitia dalle nostre innovatrice per venire a un suo illicito dissegno. Ma, essendo data non al modo che lor volevano, ma saviamente (imperoché da quella augusta Sedia non può proceder se non cose giuste et pacifice) la non può giovare un quanquo alli suoi illeciti desii, et a noi nulla nocere, anzi esser utile, imperoché tanto è ben limitata, che ancor di dritto è contra le sue voglie et contiene tutto il contrario a quella sua novitade di centure, ancorche'l non fosse contrario alla Regola.

Primo dice che dà licentia a essa Compagnia, dapoi a essi Governatori, terzo a

esse Governatrici, di far nove leggi.

Il qual modo sempre è tenuto da noi. Per[979]ché: primo, mi era proposto dalle vergine la cosa da ordenare di novo. Da poi io la proponeva alle Governatrice. Et

così parimente, di commun consenso, considerata la utilitade manifesta, non senza oratione previe medie et sossequente, se fava la legge. Ma qui, in questa novitade, il

tutto è fatto senza tal giusto procedere, senza commune consenso.

Da poi dà due altre limitationi, dicendo: che sian cose lecite et honeste. Sta novitade non è lecita per assai ragione; non è honesta; il che altrove demostraremo. Non adunque lor la ponno nanche per questa altra limitatione introdurre, ancorché altramente il commun consenso ce fusse. Ma ancor: poniamo che tutte ste cose ce fusseno, non però per questa concessione ancor se potrebbe indurre tal novitade. Percioché dice, et più stretto limita, che solamente quelle lecite ordinationi se possiano fare, le quale pertengano al regimento al tranquillo stato, o numero, o conditione, o etade delle vergini. Questa novitade a nulla di queste cose pertiene; adonque qui non ce ha licentia d'introdurla. Perché non ogni legge altra, lecita et honesta, conciede di poter fare; ma limitatamente di quelle che al reggimento bono et tranquillo necessarie sono. Et dice che, di questa sorte, se altre ce sono fatte et se ce ne faranno (come dà licentia), dà licentia di alterar queste; queste solamente, dico, et non quelle della Regola approbata; et farle di novo, essendo se intende il bisogno, perché cosa buona fatta male, et cosa cat[979<sup>v</sup>]tiva fatta bene, niente tiene.

Hor constitutioni cerca cotale cose sono come quella che già è fatta dalla fondatrice, che fece la Matre principale. Da poi fece gli Colonelli. Terzo ordenò gli Protettori gli Gentilhuomini. Et avanti fece il Cancellier che scrisse la Regola et tutte le cose pertinenti a essa, et gl'impose scriver molte altre cose; et lo fece Protettor di essa Compagnia, a difender la Compagnia spetialmente dalle male dottrine et opinioni, et a manifestargli la veritade della dottrina sua. Ma questi non se hanno da cangiare, perché la Matre gl'ha lassati et fatti; et un altro Canceglier tale non se poteva fare, perché nol poteva haver la mente della Fondatrice come io ho avuto.

Dopo la morte della fondatrice ce è fatta ancora l'Arcicolonella, ce sono fatte sopra ciò molte leggi; se ponno fare delle Maestre delle novizzette, delli Procuratori, et sopra ciò fare le sue leggi; le quale fatte, vedendo per la esperientia poi non servire bene al detto governo, queste dà licentia di cambiarle et farle di novo. Il che è co-

sa giusta et honesta.

Ma quelli ordini fatti dalla fondatrice, et confirmati dalla episcopal Sedia vuole che stieno intatti et inalterabili. Et questo è così, né pò, né dee esser altramente. Et perché, chiarissimamente essa littera il mostra, dicendo prima che l'approba et conferma; che gli dà la forza perpetua; che'l decerne che la sia servata perpetualmente. Da poi, quando (dove dà licentia di alterare) dice: non li medemi, ma altri; la qual voce [980<sup>r</sup>] sícome significa il medemo di genere, così denota il diverso di spetie; siché la lettione della Bolla grida questo, et che altri sono gl'ordini che per la papal concessione mutar se possino.

Non può esser altramente per tre ragioni.

Primo: la prefatione, la petitione, lo epilogo il medemo gridano; onde, se la concessione non correspondesse, sareve la cosa inetta, sproportionata, et a sé contraria, et a foggia d'un mostro, simile a quello de Horatio, humano. Il che non è pur nanche da pensare in cotali reverende pagine, anzi, ogni cosa lì veramente è conforme, semplice et una, secondo il precetto del medesimo Horatio.

Da poi: seguirebbe un altra cosa impossibile alla Sedia apostolica, dalla quale non può proceder se non cose giuste et savie; cioè che qui il Sommo Padre nel conceder sareve inconstante, et a sé repugnante, che quello che hora con eterno decreto ha stabilito, subito dopo, et quasi in un medemo fiato et momento, die licentia di alterarlo et cangiarlo, o far altre leggi che quelle struggano. Il qual sacrilego biasmo non è pur nanche da pensarlo in homo alcuno di senso commune, non che poi nel Sommo Padre nostro.

Terzo: questo non se po; perché, essendo quelli capitoli pieni se non di dottrina apostolica, et essendo lì posto il pane evangelico spezzato a quelle vergine et il verbo di vita, chi pò aver sta licen[980°]tia di cangiare et alterar questi documenti pò haver licentia di contrafar il Verbo Divino et esse vie di Spirito Santo; dico ancor nell'habito, che è sta ordenato secondo la dottrina apostolica. Siché non può la Bolla dar sta licentia.

Non pò, dico; ma nanche dee dir questo la Bolla, per quatro cause. La prima, perché fareve cosa contraria alle leggi ecclesiastiche, che voleno che gli statuti et ordinationi di Patri stiano inalterabile, come dice Gelasio et Leon papi; et a tal proposito son allegati da san Bernardo. Imperoché la Ecclesia vuole che quello stie inviolabile, che sa esser venuto dal Spirito non humano. Onde dice la Scrittura: «Legem matris tuae ne despexeris», cioè d'ogni persona santa, che te genera nel Verbo di Veritade.

La seconda, è perché fareve ingiuria all'Episcopo fratello suo, che, quello che egli havesse approbato et sicome divinamente ordenato havesse data indulgentia quotidiana a chi l'osservava, mo il Pontefice desse licentia a cervelli humani di messedarlo a suo modo. Il qual atto, desleale et contro il debito dell'amor fraterno, mai procedereve dal Capo della Giesa nelli suoi congovernatori et compagni del regimento di tanta impresa.

L'altra è che, havendo noi supplicato al Sommo Padre maggior fermezza degl'ordini della Regola, sarebbe scortesia insolita non solamente non ci la concedesse, ma gli levasse quella che gli ha data [981<sup>r</sup>] la Sedia episcopale, mentre che dà potestà di cangiarla. Da poi, che desse potestà ad altri maggiore della somma (cioè sua propria); mentre che altri ponno far ciò che egli mai farebbe, cioè infirmare ciò che egli una volta ha stabilito: Quia, quod semel placuit, amplius displicere non debet.

Ne seguirebbe un altro mostruoso inconveniente, che un suddito havesse potestà di rimover il Sigillo episcopale et alterare le cose ivi da lui approbate.

Item, un altro seguirebbe: che fosse possibile quel che è impossibile, percioché quel che mai la Giesa non ha fatto né fa, ciò è impossibile essere, secondo San Girolamo.

Ancor seguirebbe quella stessa cosa fusse stabilita, et non stabilita, et così doi contradittorii converrebbero.

Ancor questo seguirebbe, che la forza menore vencesse la maggiore.

Ancor seguirebbe, che le conditioni poste et attribuite a un membro principale

non fusseno sue, ma fusseno d'un altra principal parte.

Finalmente, cosa fuor di discorso di ragione sareve, che'l Pontefice quello ch'egli ha detto esser ordenato da vergine tocche dal Divino Spirito, egli poi lo commettesse al spirito humano da voltarlo a suo modo. Siché la cosa di chiaro sta come noi dicemo, né dee né può star altramente; et chi ostinatamente volesse affermare che, per quella additione, il Signor nostro desse licentia di cangiar et violare li inviolabili documenti et ordini della Regola, [981] direi quelli esser falsarii delle Bolle apostoliche et guastatori de suoi sacri decreti, et perciò che caderiano nelli horrendi sdegni dell'omnipotente Dio, de suoi sacri apostoli san Piero et san Paolo.

Ma hormai deveniamo alla tradottione delle altre due parti della concessione, dove il Santo Padre conciede a esse vergini due altre belle et grandi gratie, et l'una et l'altra con decreti le fortifica: la prima è di lassi fatti con conditione, la seconda dell'indulgentia plenaria.

### Tradottione delle due ultime parti della concessione.

Concediamo ancora ad esse vergini, et a ciascuna di quelle, che possiano havere et conseguire, entrando in questa Compagnia, ogni legato et donatione, ogn'altro lasso et dispositione di qualonque beni et cose, et di qualsisia quantitade et qualitade, quando allor lasciati saranno sotto conditione che entrino in qualche monasterio, overo facciano professione di Religione, over se maritino; et questo per quali si sia persone sia fatto ancor nelle lor ultime voluntà, et con pena (se haranno contrafatto) che caschino da così fatti beni, siché vadano ad altre persone o a luoghi pii; overo altrimente in qualonque si voglia modo cotali lassi siano fatti, o siano per farsi.

Concediamo, dico, con l'autoritade et tenore che habbiamo detto di sopra; femo anci gratia ad esse vergini che, entrando in questa Compagnia, siano giudicate (in quanto a questo appartiene) haver sodisfatto ad esse voluntade de testadori, non altrimente come se fusseno entrate in monasterio, over havesso[982] no fatta professione di Religione, o havessono contratto il matrimonio; con deliberato decreto sopra ciò provedendo che cotali beni non possiano altrove gir, né per altrove rivolti esser tenuti, né esser tenuti che giti siano. Siché se habbia a giudicar et interpretar esser ancor irrito, nullo et vano, se sarà che qualsisia giudice, o sapendolo o non sapendolo, per qualonque autoritade altrimente sopra ciò sia attentato o fatto, mentre che a quelli et a qualonque si voglia di quelli togliemo ogni autoritade et potestade di giudicare et di interpretare altramente.

Et oltra ciò, a le sopradette giovanette et vergine, tutte insieme, et a ciascheduna per una, pietosamente nel Signore concediamo et gratiosamente doniamo la plenaria indulgenza et remissione di tutti i lor peccati, nel giorno che entrano in essa Compagnia, et ancor nel giorno che muoiono. Et con deliberato decreto provediamo che essa indulgenza per niente sia compresa sotto qualonque se vogliano revocationi, sospensioni, derogationi di simili o dissimili indulgentie, ancorché fusseno in favore della fabrica del Domo del Prencipe degli Apostoli della Cittade, et ancora in favore della santa Cruciata; over che ad altro modo, secondo il tempo, fatte

fusseno per Noi, o per la stessa Sedia.

Deliberiamo con decreto tal indulgentia per niente esser compresa in cotali cose, ma sempre da quelle sia eccettuata; siché a questo non habbian ad esser impedimento quali si siano contrarie constitutioni et ordinationi apostoliche.

#### Dechiaratione.

Hora per esperientia ritrovo quello esser vero che la Chiesa, parlando [982<sup>v</sup>] a Dio di suoi Santi, dice: «Et desiderio eorum non fraudasti eos». Imperoché vedo adesso, di chiaro, Dio haver adempiuto il desiderio della Madre Angela sopra sta Compagnia, et tanto havergelo satiato quanto più non se poteva, percioché non solamente il Santo Padre gli ha concesse le tre gratie che bramava, ma il gele ha ancor con altri tanti decreti stabilite et fortificate. Una era della confirmatione della Regola; l'altra di lassi; la terza della plenaria indulgenza. Tutte queste tre cose se hanno havute con pienissima apostolica liberalitade. Siché ha tutte le fortezze, mo, la Compagnia nostra contra tutti e suoi nemici.

O quale gratie in Cielo dee essa santa Matre nostra riferire a Dio, et a essa somma Trinitade, alla Madonna, alli Apostoli, alli Martiri, et Confessori, alle Vergine, et a tutta la Corte celestiale, per tanto grande et inappreciabil beneficio.

Tradottione della conclusione, quarta et ultima parte della Bolla.

Adonque, del tutto a nessuno delli homini sia lecito et concesso di spezzare, over con prosontuoso ardire gir contra a questa carta della nostra assolutione, della approbatione, della confirmatione, della additione, del sopplemento, della concessione, della gratiosa donatione dell'indulgenza, et de decreti. Hor se alcuno sarà presontuoso di haver ardire di voler attentar questo, sappia che incorrerà nello sdegno dell'omnipotente Dio et de suoi beati apostoli Pietro et Paolo.

Data a Roma a San Pietro, nell'anno dell'Incarna[983<sup>r</sup>]tione del Signore millesimo quingentesimo quadragesimo quarto, nel quinto giorno avanti le idi di Giugno,

nel X anno del nostro ponteficato.

## Tradottione della commissione del Pontefice alli Protettori.

Commettiamo alla vostra discretione, per gli apostolici scritti, ogni volta che voi, o due overo uno di voi, sareti sopra ciò richiesti per parte di essi Governatori et Governatrici, o per parte di alcuno di loro, dove et quando et quante fiate sarà di mistieri, habbiate ancor per un altro, over altri, solennemente a publicare le predet-

te lettre, et tutte le cose che in ciò se contengono, et il tutto far servare.

Siché nelle predette cose stiate con l'aiuto dell'efficace difesa alla lor guardia, facendo che con l'autorità nostra che cotali lettre, et ciò che in loro se contiene, fermamente osservato sia. Et che tutti quelli insieme, et ciascuno per sé, che esse lettre comprendendo risguardano, pacificamente se ne godeno. Non lasciandoli in ciò contro il tenore delle lettre medesime nostre a nissun modo esser molestati da chi si voglia persona. Costrengendo et castigando, senza haver riguardo a lor appellationi, con censure et castighi ecclesiastichi i contradittori et rubelli. Et oltra ciò ancora aggravando, et reaggravando ancora li castighi et le pene replicate fiade, purché sopra ciò con quei modi e foggie legittime gli Processi se facciano.

Né habbia, a foggia alcuna, a esser impedimento la provisione di Bonifacio di bona memoria papa Ottavo nostro predecessore, per la quale se provede, che Giudice

o Protettore alcuno fuor della città o diocese sua pigliare o dare se possa.

## 25. Testimonianza di Giacomo Tribesco

Brescia, Biblioteca Queriniana, Di vari Santi Bresciani, ms.D.VII.20, ff. 15v-16r.

Gionta alle cose sopradette circa le meravigliose et divine virtù operate in quella beata serafica Angela, per D. Iacomo [Tribesco] bresciano canonico lateranense.

Io D. Jacomo sopradetto da fedele sacerdote et verace predicatore dico essere vero che, trovandomi a ragionar con questa Santa Madre, et lei persuadendomi alla virtù della parsimonia per inanimarmi ad abbracciarla, dicendo che Iddio non manca del suo aiuto a chi questa abbraccia con vivo desiderio, diedimi essempio di lei stessa dicendo che nella sua gioventù, stando in casa de parenti, faceva tutte quelle fatiche che sogliono fare le donne in una casa, come sono bugate, burattar, far pane, portar acqua e molte altre fatiche, e nondimeno non mangiava in tutta la settimana se non la giobbia, e tanto pane quanto è la metà della palma della mano, mi fece il segno sopra la sua mano sinistra con la sua destra [16] mostrandomi la quantità del

pane che mangiava.

Nella morte sua non mi trovai, ero io a Cremona in tal tempo; ma fatto il Capitolo nostro venni per stantia a Brescia et fummi dalli P.P. del Monasterio di S. Affra
ritrovandosi nel tempo della sua morte et da gentihuomini della parocchia detto
che, essendo il suo corpo sopra terra molti giorni nel luogo de Santi, le prime tre sere doppo la morte sua sopra il tetto della chiesa a mira il suo corpo fu vista una lucidissima stella di gran splendore; il midemo a questi giorni a tanti di aprile del 1591
testifica un nobil gentihuomo detto per nome il signor Constantino, che fu figliolo
del signor Maffeo Bona, dicendo che suo padre vidde questa stella sopra il corpo di
questa Beata per tre di e notte, ove concorse assai popolo a veder con gran stupore.

Di più dico che da un padre frate Obicio cappuccino molto devoto fummi detto, che un R.do prete de Rossi disse, in presentia de frati Raffaello di Brescia et di frate David da Gusago tutti due cappuccini, che detto Prete ritrovandosi in compagnia con un gentilhuomo a legger li versi fatti in laude di Madre Suor Angela, ch'erano posti sopra la sua arca doppo morte che il gentilhuomo dicendo: «Dio sa se gli vengono queste laudi», et subito nel dir tali parole fu sentito nell'arca un tanto gran strepito, che parve si spezzasse l'arca, segno potissimo che il dubbio di quel gentil-

huomo non era buono

## 26. Atto d'elezione di Veronica Buzzi

Brescia, Archivio di Stato, Fondo di Religione, Cartella «Compagnia di S. Orsola», reg. 134, Secondo Libro Generale, ff. 54r-55r.

In Christi nomine. Amen. Anno ab eiusdem nativitate millesimo quingentesimo quinquagesimo quinto, indictione tertiadecima, die vero quartodecimo mensis Maii, in loco infirmarie infrascripte Societatis Sancte Ursule, site in civitate Brixie, in contrata Sancti Bartholomei, presentibus etc.

Convocata et congregata la Compagnia della Regola della quondam Madre Sur Angela del Terzo Ordine, intitulata di Santa Orsola, al modo solito nel luogo sopradetto, per ordinar le cose infrascritte, nel qual luogo erano le infrascritte donne, vi-

delicet:

D. Catherina di Gatusi, che ha la voce per lei et per D. Camilla Tiranda et D. Maria de Zuan di Scalvo; D. Hieronyma di Jora; D. Antonia di Pelizoni; D. Anuntiata del q. Francesco del Bono; D. Fiora del q. Martino da Cazago; D. Bianca di Martinoni; D. Santa, collonella de Santo Gioanne, che ha la sua voce et quella de D. Catherina da Gedi et de D. Lodoviga sua compagna; D. Gioanna di Bertelli, che ha la voce ancora di D. Domenega di Zagi; D. Gratiosa del Mangan; D. Domenega di Mascardi; D. Paula di Grisi; D. Anuntiata di Milioli; D. Catherina de Capreolo; D. Ma-

ria di Martinelli; D. Angela da Serli, collonella de Santo Nazaro, che ha la voce ancora de D. Orsola sta col medico di Cinalii; D. Pavola et D. Marta sorelle, stanno col cancelliero del Hospitale Grande; D. Maria da Leno, collonella de Santo Faustino, et D. Scholastica et D. Lucretia, tutte trei sorelle, che hanno la voce ancora di D. Isabetta di Franchi; D. Pedra del Todesco, beccharo; D. Agnese di Chiodaroli; D. Maria, sta con M. Vicenzo Hieremia; D. Maria de mastro Gioanne, fornaro; D. Domenega della Pieve de Bon; D. Margarita della Madre, che ha la voce ancora de D. Marietta sta alli Miracoli; D. Maria, sorella de m.ro Bartholomeo Cantarane; D. Catherina de Jacomino di Bertoldi; D. Franceschina da Locio; D. Margarita, collonella di Santa Affra; D. Antonia di Georgio da Trento; D. Marta di Aradori; D. Angela di Pontolii; D. Cipriana di Mortari; D. Margarita de Lucretia cremonesa; D. Antonia et D. Gioanna da Riviera, sorelle: D. Andreana, collonella di Mercato Novo, che ha la voce ancora di D. Margarita di Tonoli et di D. Isabetta et di D. Marta di Caprioli; D. Peregrina, collonella del Dommo, che ha la voce de D. Cecilia sua figliuola; D. Anuntiata della Zoppa; D. Santa di Locadelli, che ha la voce [54<sup>v</sup>] anco di D. Marta di Buzzi et D. Aurelia de Pugnatoribus; D. Domenega de Sopraponte, et D. Domenega de Mapheo di Remondini. Quale Madonne dicono esser, delle trei parti, le duoi di essa Compagnia; et essersi così radunate perché al presente se ritrovano senza madre et capo loro; et impossibile è che questa Compagnia possa star in piedi et governarsi secondo la loro regola et constitutioni, senza madre et capo.

Et acciò le cose per inspiration divina ordinate non siano totalmente destitute, et il cuor di esse Madonne più se reinforzi all'osservanza et ordini da loro incominciati, et caminar alla via di acquistar il paradiso, hanno deliberato, per questa loro congregatione, di eleggersi una madre et capo, dalla quale ne possano sperar buona conservatione della loro regola et ordine, pregando Dio che le inspirano, che a fare una tanta santa elettione et creatione di madre facciano cosa che le sia utile al-

l'anima et laude al corpo loro.

Però, per scruttinio diligentemente fatto, sono sta nominate in madre et capo di essa Compagnia le infrascritte donne, videlicet: D. Orsina di Gavardi, D. Isabetta da Prato, D. Veronica di Buzzi et D. Leonella di Pedezocchi. Le quali, ad una per una balottate in voce secreta con bonissimo ordine, si sono risolte in due sole, cioè D. Isabetta et D. Veronica. Delle quali duoi sole, essa D. Isabetta ha avuto voci dieciotto secrete, et D. Veronica ha ottenuto il luogo della Madre et capo di essa Compagnia con voci trentasette secrete; con protestatione però per esse Madonne fatta, che non intendono né voleno per alcun modo che si deponga la cinctura, perché da alcune di essa Compagnia era sta proposto avanti si venesse a questa santa elettione. Ma voleno che ad ogni modo ella si porti, et che si serva tutto quello è sta servato sotto al R.do Mons. Aurelio Durante et Mons. Donato Savallo, l'uno archidiacono et l'altro arciprete di Dommo, et di esse Madonne altre volte conservatori, refferendosi ancora al giudicio et parere delli R.di Mons. Agostino Gentile et Mons. Carlo Soldo, della Chiesa Maggior canonici, et al presente di esse Madonne conservatori. De ciò di sopra, per loro è sta proposto et letto et terminato, attesa l'absentia d'essi R.mi conservatori; delle qual cose ne son rogato io, Francesco Galvano, nodaro infrascritto, doverne far publico instrumento, se così piacerà alli prefati signori conservatori.

In Christi nomine. Amen. Anno ab eiusdem nativitate millesimo quingentesimo quinquagesimo quinto, indictione tertiadecima, die vero vigesimotertio [55<sup>r</sup>] mensis Maii, in caminata terranea domorum habitationis D. Helisabet de Prato site in

civitate Brixie, in contrata Plathee Ecclesie Maioris sive Broletti; presentibus D. Andrea filio D. Ioannis de Amatis, et ser Bartholomeo de Cozanis, civibus et habitato-

ribus Brixie, testibus rogatis notis et ad hec specialiter vocatis.

Convocate et congregate di novo nel luogo sopradetto tutte le collonelle della sopradetta Compagnia, videlicet: D. Peregrina collonella del Dommo, D. Andreana collonella del Mercato Novo, D. Maria collonella de Santo Faustino, D. Santa collonella de Santo Gioanne, D. Margarita collonella de Santa Afra, et D. Angela collonella di Santo Nazaro, quali representano tutte le altre prenominate Madonne della Compagnia predetta, et hanno la voce loro per dover far il presente instrumento, de comission però et mandato del R.do Mons. Carlo Soldo conservator di esse Madonne predette, qual dice ancora haver havuto il consenso di Mons. Agostino Gentile, similmente conservator come disopra, alle cose disopra ordinate et statuite per esse Madonne; et quelle hanno approbate et confirmate, et approbano et confirmano, per relation da esso Mons. Carlo havuta, per me nodaro infrascritto. Et de ciò hanno commesso a me, nodaro infrascritto, che ne sia rogato dovesse far instrumento publico. Però le prenominate Madonne, over dette collonelle a nome loro, et che tutte esse representano come disopra, attesa la relatione sopradetta per me nodaro infrascritto a loro fatta, volendo, sì come sono obligate, adempire quanto a loro per essi suoi conservatori è sta commesso, di nuovo statuiscono, ordinano et creano, in tutto et da per tutto, come per loro disopra era statuito ordinato et creato, in presentia ancora de Madonna Isabetta da Prato et Madonna Leonella di Pedezochi, che accettano et laudano le cose predette. Delle qual cose ne son rogato io, Francesco Galvano, nodaro infrascritto, doverne far pubblico instrumento, a laudo de savio huomo.

Et ego, Franciscus filius q. ser Antonii de Galvanis, publicus imperiali auctoritate notarius ac civis et habitator Brixie, quia de premissis omnibus et singulis dum sic ut supra fierent et agerentur rogatus fui. Ideo hoc presens publicum instrumentum de commissione prefati R.di D. Caroli Soldi ut supra conservatoris exinde confeci, et in hanc publicam formam redegi, meque, in fidem et robur solita mea attestatione et signo consueto appositis, sic ut supra requisitus subscripsi.

## 27. Atto notarile 22 febbraio 1545

Brescia, Archivio di Stato, Fondo Notarile, notaio Gio. Maria Maffetti, filza 850. Inedito.

Mandatum Societatis Sancte Ursule

1545, Indictione tertia, die vigesimo secundo mensis februarii, in caminata terranea domus habitationis infrascripte Magnifice Comitisse quam conducit a ser Mapheo Mazola in contrata Mercati Novi Civitatis Veteris Brixie.

Presentibus Ven. Don Jo. Jacobo de Prioris de Castiono a Stiveris curato in monasterio S. Afre civitatis Brixie, Antonio quondam Betini de Jotellis servitore suprascripte Magnifice Comitisse, et Floramonte quondam Jo. Petri de Calvisano limatore in Brixia, testibus rogatis notis et vocatis.

Convocatis et congregatis in loco suprascripto omnibus et singulis Verginibus Societatis sive Confraternitatis S. Ursule civitatis Brixie, alias institute et formate per Ven. dominam Sur Angelam de Mericis Tertii Ordinis de observantia S. Francisci, de mandato et comissione Magnifice Comitisse relicte quondam Magnifici Comitis Hectoris de Lodrono domine ministre, thesaurarie et priorisse dicte Societatis vigore libertatis et baylie sibi date et atribute per prefatam quondam dominam Sur Angelam, et deinde confirmate per dictam Societatem, ut in Capitulario sive Privilegiis dicte Societatis dicitur apparere, ad faciendum, et effectualiter eligendi, creandi et constituendi unum vel plures procuratores, actores, deffensores et negotiorum gestores dicte Societatis, qui habeant bene, recte et diligenter administrare et regulare bona et iura dicte Societatis, et omnia et singula et quecumque alia negotia occurrentia dicte Societati facere et exercere, ut si tota dicta Societas presens adesset.

In quo quidem loco aderant omnes infrascripte videlicet prefata Magnifica Comitissa, priorissa et thesauraria, domina Martha quondam spectabilis doctoris domini Camilli de Butiis, D. Aurelia q. D. Horatii de Pugnatoribus, Teodora serva D. Marthe de Cazago, Julia de Bozonis, Catharina serva D. Genebrie de Luzago, Dominica serva magistri Maphei de Granettis, Maria filia m.ri Piceni de Pedrochis, Lucia filia m.ri Marci de Bombellis, Margarita m.ri Francisci de Bonellis, Jacobina m.ri Johannis de Collibus, Martha serva D. Samaritane de Capirolis, D. Gratiosa m.ri Andree del Mangano, Anuntiata m.ri Francisci Boni, Angela filia Thome de Serlis, Johana m.ri Bartolomei de Bertellis, Theodora Michaelis de Vitalibus, Catharina m.ri Francisci de Claris, Maria Cipriani de Bornado, Lucretia m.ri Marci de Gardono, Vitoria m.ri Antonii de Ardesio, Petra m.ri Pauli de Flumine Nigro, Helisabet m.ri Jacobi de Forestis, Helisabet m.ri Francisci Gorelle de Bornado, Flora m.ri Comini de Castiono, Laura m.ri Angeli Cinalie, Cecilia m.ri Albertini de Albriccis, Catharina m.ri Francisci de Tayardellis, Cypriana q. ser Jo. Marie de Mortarea Maria filia Antonii de Barcho, Antonia et Joanna sorores q. Antonii de Nozia, Helisabet et Johana Maria de Casariis, Damisella q. m.ri Marci Antoni de Cinaliis, Maria m.ri Camilli de Spadariis, Catharina Antonii de Gotiis, Lucretia Betini de Vaylate, Dominica Francisci de Moschatis, Jacobina et Petra sorores Mathei Gisonelli, Andreana m.ri Martialis de Zabellis, Lucia m.ri Mathei de Notariis, Maria Scholastica et Lucretia sorores filie m.ri Bertolini de Garginis, Catharina m.ri Baptiste de Panateris, Martha m.ri Christophori de Polinis, Sancta m.ri Cypriani de Locadellis, Margarita Cresimbeni de Valtrompia, Joana m.ri Martini de Valtrompia, Peregrina Petri de Cozalibus de Salodio, Catharina m.ri Christophori de Grossis, Gabriela Faustini Proletti, Maria de Spalentiis, Camilla ser Francisci de Tirandis, Dominica Maphei (...), Maria de Castiono, Blancha Jacobi Fachini, Antonia D. Bernardi de Lothis, Margaritta Betini del Rima, Genebria Baptiste de Florentia, Catharina Bartolomei de Margnaga, Ursula m.ri Stephani Marengoni, Helisabeta serva D. Pauli de Federicis, Martha et Catharina sorores de Monticellis, Maria ser Danielis de Fruscatis, Simona Morganti de Bornado, Clara Bressani de Peschiera, Maria de Martinellis, Margaritta Dominici bambasarii, Catharina m.ri Joanisboni de Carasis, Agnes Jacobini Scarparotti et Catharina de Capriolo,

omnes de dicta Societate sive Confraternitate, et asserentes eccedere duas partes trium partium dicte Societatis, et representantes totam ipsam Societatem, unanimes, nemine discrepante, non propter hoc revocando aliquid hinc retro gestum factum et administratum per prefatam Magnificam Comitissam priorissam et thesaurariam ut supra, sed potius confirmando, ratificando et aprobando et (...) confise de fi-

de, integritate, sufficientia et (...) dicte Domine thesaurarie (...) omni meliore modo, iure, via, forma, et causa quibus magis et melius de jure fieri potest, fecerunt, constituerunt, creaverunt et ordinaverunt, ac faciunt, constituunt et ordinant sorores et dicte Societatis procuratrices, administratrices et negotiorum gestatrices: prefatam Magnificam Comitissam priorissam et thesaurariam; venerabiles matronas D. Genebriam de Luzago, D. Veronicam de Butiis, D. Helisabeta de Prato, D. Leonellam de Pedezzochis, D. Ursinam de Gavardis; presentes et acceptantes ad omnes et singulas dicte Societatis lites, questiones, causas et controversias tam presentes quam futuras, tam ecclesiasticas quam seculares et mixtas, et ad comparendum coram quocumque judice tam ecclesiastico quam seculari, delegato et subdelegato, et coram eis petitiones, comparitiones, replicas, capitula, positiones, testes et quecumque alia juris ipsius Societatis dandum et presentandum, et contra dictam Societatem datas respondendum, ipsas quoque lites prosequendo usque ad decisionem, sententias quascumque ratificandum et ab eis appellandum quae (...) et de nullitate dicendum

et (...) petendum.

Et super dictas lites, et in quocumque alio negotio dicte Societatis transigendum, componendum et paciscendum. Item ad exigendum omnes et quascumque pecuniarum quantitates a quibuscumque personis dare debentibus dicte Societati, tam occasione legatorum quam elemosinarum et ex quacumque alia de causa et occasione, et de exactis instrumenta scripta manus liberationis faciendum in valida et solemni forma, et de ipsis peccuniis sic exactis (...) emendum sive investiendum in bonis stabilibus, vel etiam dictas peccunias dispensandum inter pauperes dicte Societatis, vel aliter, prout magis et melius expediens videbitur et placuerit prefatis dominis procuratricibus vel maiori parti earum; item ad affranchationem possint cogi quoscumque livellarios dicte Societatis, vel eos alteri personae cedere et super premissis et in quocumque negotio per eas, vel maiorem partem earum, faciendo, obligando omnia et singula bona presentia et futura dicte Societatis; et quascumque promissiones et obligationes faciendum etiam cum promissione de evictione et legum deffensione quando expediens et necesse erit, et de predictis (...); item ad substituendum unam et plures procuratrices in premissis et circa premissa cum sancita vel limitata potestate et libertate. Et generaliter ad dicendum, faciendum et exercendum omnia et singula que prefate domine constituentes, sic congregate ut supra, facerent et exercerent si participes adessent, etiam si talia forent que mandatum exigerent magis spetiale. Dantes plenum, liberum, generale ac spetiale mandatum prefatis dominis procuratricibus et maiori parti earum, ita tamen quod generalitas non derogetur spetialitati nec e contra predicta omnia et singula dicendi, faciendi, procurandi et exercendi; promittentes etc. obligantes etc. renuntiantes etc.

Rogatum per me Jo. Mariam de Maphettis notarium.

## 28. Atto notarile 23 novembre 1555

Brescia, Archivio di Stato, Fondo Notarile, notaio Girolamo Zanetti, filza 1694. Inedito.

Electio pro Confraternitate Sanctae Ursulae Brixiae

In Christi nomine. Anno ab eiusdem nativitate millesimo quingentesimo quinquagesimo quinto, indictione tertiadecima, die vigesimotertio novembris, in quadam caminata superiori domorum habitationis infrascriptae magnificae dominae Genebriae, contratae Merchati Novi, civitatis Brixiae, praesentibus Andrea, filio Joannis de Bussis furnario, habitatore Brixiae, et Antonio, quondam Joannis Ziletti, habitatore Bassani, testibus rogatis, notis et ad infrascripta specialiter vocatis. Congregata et more solito convocata Confraternitate, Societate et Congregatione matronarum, virginum et puellarum sub invocatione Sanctae Ursulae in civitate Brixiae instituta, errecta, et fundata per bonae memoriae Matrem Sororem Angelam Tertii Ordinis Sancti Francisci, successivisque temporibus et per Reverendissimum Episcopum Brixiensem, seu eius Reverendum Vicarium et per litteras apostolicas con-

firmata, ac plurimis privilegiis aucta, in qua aderant

magnifica matrona domina Genebria de Luzago, generalis gubernatrix, administratrix et mater, domina Clara filia quondam magistri Beltrami de Pachieris, promittens etiam pro D. Isabetta eius sorore, D. Margarita q. m.ri Christofori de Bonis, D. Maria q. Danielis de Fruscatis, D. Catharina q. ser Christofori de Grossis, D. Maria q. D. Joannis Baptistae de Spalentiis, D. Barbara q. D. Augustini de Valtortis, promittens etiam pro D. Jacobina de Collibus, D. Dominica q. Antonii de Gotiis, promittens etiam pro D. Catharina eius sorore, D. Simona q. D. Joannis Mariae de Bornato de Navis, D. Catharina q. m.ri Betini de Bovegno, D. Julia q. m.ri Natalis de Zabellis, promittens etiam pro D. Andreana eius sorore, pro D. Gratiosa de Manganis et pro D. Dominica de Cobiato, D. Catharina et Martha sorores filiae q. Joannis Francisci de Monticellis, D. Dominica q. m.ri Francisci de Gattis, promittens etiam pro D. Isabetta de Casariis, D. Catharina q. m.ri Baptistae de Panatellis, D. Julia q. m.ri Apolonii de Bozolis, promittens etiam pro D. Flora et Honoria sororibus, filiabus q. m.ri Marcolini de Castiono, et pro D. Veronica et Margarita, filiabus m.ri Joannis Jacobi de Pellettis, ac pro D. Catharina q. Lucae de Trimusio, D. Maria q. m.ri Joanini de Isibaldis de Valtrompia, D. Margarita q. Crescimbeni de Isibaldis de Valtrompia, D. Ursula q. m.ri Stephani Marengoni, D. Catharina q. m.ri Antonii de Merzadris de Riperia Sallodii, promittens etiam pro D. Margarita q. Galeatii de Maiineris, D. Sanctina de Calvazesio q. Lucae de Guereriis, D. Catharina et Paula sorores q. m.ri Sebastiani de Coradinis et D. Catharina q. Antonii de Joanettis, repraesentantes totam, veram et saniorem partem, prout asserunt, Confraternitatis et Societatis praedictae et pro ea agentes,

considerantes sibi et Congregationi ipsi opportunum et necessarium, ac expediens iuxta eius regulam ad occurrentes necessitates de quorum probis hominibus providere prottectoresque ipsius idoneos, pro conservatione Confraternitatis et Societatis praedictae et iurium sororum manutentione habere, unanimiter et concorditer, Deoque inspirante, et habita matura consideratione ac informatione de probitate et integritate infrascriptorum omnium omni meliore modo, iure, via, forma et causa, quibus melius et validius fieri potest, fecerunt, constituerunt, eligerunt et deputaverunt, ac faciunt, constituunt, eligunt et deputant earum et dictae Confraternitatis, iuxtaque eius regulam praedictam, procuratores, agentes, actores et deffenso-

res et patres ad occurrentes necessitates praedictum dominum Gabrielem de Cocialibus etiam secundum dictae fundatricis intentionem scribam et dominum Julium Baltheum, notarios, cives et habitatores Brixiae, praesentes et onus praedictum in se sponte suscipientes, nec non et dominum Jovitam de Bonis notarium, et dominum Hieronimum de Girardettis quondam domini Bernardini, pariter cives et habitatores Brixiae, absentes tamquam praesentes, tam ad agendum, quam ad deffendendum et ad generaliter faciendum, gerendum et exercendum omnia et singula utilia, necessaria et opportuna ipsius Congregationis seu Confraternitatis et Societatis prottettores autem suos eligerunt et eligunt, ac deputaverunt et deputant, magnificum dominum Johannem Mariam de Pischeriis, magnificum Equitem dominum Marcum Antonium de Mauris et magnificum dominum Hieronimum de Luzagis, omnes cives et habitatores Brixiae, absentes tamquam praesentes. De quibus omnibus rogatus sum ego, Hieronimus Zanetti, notarius infrascriptus, publicum conficere instrumentum ad laudem sapientis.

## 29. Atto notarile 18 settembre 1556

Brescia, Archivio di Stato, Fondo Notarile, notaio Girolamo Zanetti, filza 1694. Inedito.

Procura pro Societate Sanctae Ursulae

In Christi nomine, anno ab eiusdem Nativitate millesimo quingentesimo quinquagesimo sexto, indictione quarta decima, die decimo octavo septembris, in quadam camera superiori domorum habitationis infrascriptae magnificae dominae Genebriae, contratae Merchati Novi civitatis Brixiae, praesentibus domino Antonio, filio domini Petri Jacobi Leonini notarii, cive et habitatore Brixiae, et domino Alovisiio, filio domini Johannis Jacobi de Vasianis de Desensiano, ad praesens habitatore Brixiae, testibus rogatis, notis et vocatis, magnifica domina Genebria de Luciago, civis et habitatrix Brixiae, universalis gubernatrix et mater Societatis seu Confraternitatis sub invocatione Sanctae Ursulae civitatis Brixiae,

nec non et D. Isabetta et D. Clara, sorores, filiae q. m.ri Beltrami de Pacheris, promittens etiam D. Clara pro voce D. Juliae filiae quondam m.ri Apolonii de Bozolis et de eam ratificari faciendo sub obligatione sui reali et personali, D. Margaritta filia q. m.ri Christophori de Bonis, D. Simona, filia q. Johannis Mariae de Bornato de Navis, promittens etiam ut supra pro D. Catharina de Trimusio et pro D. Veronica, filia q. m.ri Jacobi de Pelettis, D. Barbara, filia q. D. Augustini de Valtortis, promittens etiam ut supra pro D. Jacobina, filia q. m.ri Joannis de Colibus, D. Dominica, filia q. Antoni de Gotiis, promittens etiam pro D. Catharina eius sorore, D. Andreana et Julia, so[ro]res filiae q. m.ri Natalis de Zabellis, promittentes etiam ut supra pro D. Catharina, filia q. Antoni de Jovanettis de Bargis et pro D. Isabetta de Casaris, D. Maria, filia q. D. Joannis Baptistae de Spalenzis, D. Catharina et Martha sorores, filiae q. ser Joannis Francisci de Monticellis, promitentes etiam ut supra pro voce D. Mariae, filiae q. D. Danielis de Fruscadis ac etiam pro voce D. Santinae de Calvazezio, D. Catharina, filia q. m.ri Baptistae de Panatellis, D. Margaritta, filia q. D. Galiatii de Maineris, D. Dominica, filia q. m.ri Francisci de Gattis, D. Catharina, D. Catharina, filia q. m.ri Francisci de Gattis, D. Catharina, D. Catharina, filia q. m.ri Francisci de Gattis, D. Catharina, D. Catharina, filia q. m.ri Francisci de Gattis, D. Catharina, D. Catharina, filia q. m.ri Francisci de Gattis, D. Catharina, D. Catharina, filia q. m.ri Francisci de Gattis, D. Catharina, D. Catharina, filia q. m.ri Francisci de Gattis, D. Catharina, D. Catharina, filia q. m.ri Francisci de Gattis, D. Catharina, D. Catharina, filia q. m.ri Francisci de Gattis, D. Catharina, filia q. m.ri Francis

na, filia q. m.ri Christophori de Grossis, promittens etiam ut supra pro D. Maria, filia q. m.ri Jovanini de Sibaldis et pro D. Margaritta, filia q. Crescimbeni de Sibaldis de Valtrompia et D. Ursula, filia q. m.ri Stephani Marengoni, D. Catharina, filia q. m.ri Antoni de Merzadris de Salodio, D. Flora, filia q. Jacobini de Bertolis de Hemmo, promittens etiam ut supra pro D. Catharina, filia q. m.ri Betini de Bovegno, quae vocatur Antonia, D. Dominica de Cobiato, D. Catharina, filia m.ri Sebastiani de Coradinis, promittens etiam ut supra pro D. Paula eius sorore, D. Honoria, filia q. m.ri Marcolini de Castiono, promittens etiam ut supra pro voce D. Florae [lacuna] et D. Maria novitia, alumna magnificae comitissae Barbarae Sfortiae a Mediolano, mulieres et virgines dictae Societatis, asserentes se esse et repraesentare totam dictam Societatem omni meliore modo, jure, via, forma et causa, quibus melius et

validius fieri potest, scientes D. Gabrielem Cocianum, gramaticum, civem et habitatorem Brixiae olim a reverenda D. Angela, institutrice seu fundatrice dictae Societatis esse sibi delectum scribam suorum omnium institutorum ac bonarum admonitionum, ac praeterea gubernatorem et tamquam patrem ipsius Confraternitatis, in primis sectantes ipsius fundatricis voluntatem eundem praesentem et acceptantem talem scribam, gubernatorem et patrem eligerunt et eligunt, ac accipiunt, approbant atque confirmant et insuper ipsum praesentem et onus meriti in se sponte suscipientem fecerunt constituerunt et ordinaverunt, ac faciunt constituunt et ordinant suum et dictae Societatis verum nuntium missum et legitimum procuratorem ac syndicum generalem et specialem ita quod generalitas specialitati non deroget et e converso actoremque et deffensorem et tam ad agendum quam ad deffendendum ad omnes lites, questiones et causas civiles, criminales, spirituales et mixtas, praesentes et futuras, quas habent vel habiturae sunt cum quacumque persona communi, collegio et universitate, lites contestandum (personas quaslibet et in qualibet dignitate constitutas eligendo et electas revocando, totiens quotiens praefato domino constituto videbit et placuerit, terminos, petendum petitiones, comparationes, capitula, testes, iura, instrumenta, brevia, litteras apostolicas, privilegia, bullas destinatorias, processus et quaecunque alia producendum et praesentandum coram quibuscunque iudicibus, ecclesiasticis vel secularibus, delegatis et subdelegatis, conservatoribus, executoribus et subexecutoribus et quibuscunque aliis, ubi opus fuerit sententias quascunque fieri faciendum et ab eis, si opus fuerit, appellandum et de nullitate dicendum et appellationis quascunque totiens quotiens et cetera prosequendum et iurandum sub qualibet forma liciti iuramenti in earum animas et praeiuditium «ac iudices suspectos recusando et alios de novo loco sui eligendo et sic electos revocando totiens quotiens ut supra», item ad exigendum a quibuscunque dictae Societati dare debentibus et exactis.

# 30. Atto notarile 31 maggio 1558

Brescia, Archivio di Stato, Fondo Notarile, notaio Simone Sospiri, filza 1127. Inedito.

In Christi nomine, quibuscunque presentes inspecturis pateat evidenter sicuti ego Simon, notarius infrascriptus, rogatus et requisitus a domino Julio de Balteis, cive et habitatore Brixie, uti procuratore et interveniente nomine magnifice domine Genebrie de Luciago, matris et gubernatricis Societatis puellarum et virginum sub invocatione Sancte Ursule civitatis Brixiensis, anno a Nativitate Domini nostri Jesu Christi millesimo quingentesimo quinquagesimo octavo indictione prima, die ultimo maii, accessi cum eo ad infrascriptos pretensos dominos gubernatores dicte Societatis, ut ab eis veritatem habere super infrascriptis, et ut de responsione eorum

publicum conficere instrumentum, videlicet

ad spectabilem iuris utriusque doctorem dominum Gabrielem Belasium; et ipsi, invento in introitu domus sue, site in civitate brixiensi, contrate Sancte Marie miraculorum, predictus dominus Julius hec, vel similia verba importantia, videlicet: «Io son venuto dala vostra excellentia per nome della magnifica Madonna Genebria, madre et gubernatrice della Compagnia di Santa Ursula, per causa di uno breve, overo bolla sive lettere, impetrate, come in esse appare, dal santissimo Pappa, a instantia delli oratori et gubernatori et gubernatrici di essa Compagnia, directive al reverendissimo monsignor Vescovo di Termuli et alli reverendi monsignor Davit Odasio et monsignor Giovan Paulo Dalla Corte, nelle quali si asserisse la detta Madonna Genebria falsamente vantarsi esser matre et gubernatrice di essa Compagnia, per ritrovar qualche colore di poter ritener per sì certi beni pervenuti alle sue mani della detta Compagnia; et molte altre cose sono sta expresse in esse lettere sive breve; et per saper se la vostra excellentia è intervenuta a far impetrar esse lettere et breve, et maxime in far che siano poste in esse le soprascritte parolle».

Qui spectabilis dominus Gabriel respondit per hec vel similia verba importantia, videlicet: «Il breve esta impetrato a instantia nostra, atio che le sententie fatte nella differentia di essa Compagnia si havessero ad exeguire; ma di queste parolle in specie, io non ne so cosa alcuna». Presentibus Johanne Maria, filio quondam ser Bar-

tholomei de Quinciano, et Laurentio, eius fratre.

Similiterque anno, millesimo, indictione, die et mense suprascripto accessi, cum predicto domino Julio, ad dominum Antonium Mateum de Molis, pretensum gubernatorem dicte Societatis; cui, existenti sub portitu introitus domus sue, site in civitate Brixie, in contrata Porte Turris, longe predictus dominus Julius, uti interveniens ut supra, dixit verba suprascripta, vel similia importantia. Qui Dominus Antonius Mateus respondit hec, vel similia verba importantia, videlicet: «Già molti dì mi fu parlato di far una suplica al Pappa, ma io non ho mai visto detta suplica, et manco ho datto comisione, né so cosa alcuna delle suprascritte parolle». Presentibus Laurentio, filio Bartolomei de Quinziano infrascripto et Jo. Baptista de Lonato, filio quondam magistri Marci Antonii de Panicis.

Et sub die, anno, millesimo et indictione suprascriptis, accessi ut supra ad ser Julianum [lacuna], pretensum gubernatorem dicte Societatis; et eidem, existenti sub ostio domus sue, site in dicta civitate in contrata Santi Benedicti, predictus dominus Julius ut supra interveniens, pariter dixit verba in substantia de quibus supra. Qui ser Julianus respondit: «Non so et non vi volio responder adesso», presentibus

Johanne Maria et Laurentio, fratribus suprascriptis.

De quibus omnibus rogatus sum ego, Simon de Suspiris, notarius infrascriptus, publicum conficere instrumentum ad laudem sapientis.

# 31. Atto notarile 31 luglio 1558

Brescia, Archivio di Stato, Fondo Notarile, notaio Girolamo Zanetti, filza 1694. Inedito.

Fides pro Societate Sancte Ursule

In Christi nomine, anno ab eiusdem nativitate millesimo quingentesimo quinquagesimo octavo, indictione prima, die ultimo Iulii. Quibuscumque presentes inspecturis, attestor ego, Hieronimus de Zanettis, q. D. Comini, civis et habitator Brixie, notarius publicus, sicuti in mei «notarii et Andree q. Ambrosii de Mincinis sartoris, et Maphei q. Jacobi de Cegulis, habitatoris Brixie, testimoniorum ad hoc specialiter vocatorum et rogatorum presentia: D. Joannes Jacobus Vasianus de Sallodio, ad instantiam magnifice D. Genebrie de Luciaghis, matris et gubernatricis puellarum Societatis Sancte Ursule Brixie, ac puellarum et Societatis predicte, presentavit et in manibus dimisit, die predicta, Reverendo D. Joanni Paulo de Curte, canonico Brixiensi, copiam per me notarium transumptam ex litteris, seu monitorio, subscriptis et sigillatis, ac penes me existentibus, Reverendi D. Fratris Andree de Cathaneis, prepositi Prepositure Sancti Marini, Ordinis Humiliatorum in terra Crema, subexequutoris vigore electionis Generalis ceterorum et cetera, in processu fulminato super litteris Reverendissimi D. Legati Apostolici Venetiis comorantis, directivisque premisso Reverendo D. Joanni Paulo, tenoris ut latius in eis subscriptis, ut videtur, per dictum Reverendum D. Prepositum, nec non et per D. Dominicum Dro, notarium Creme collationatum, sub die sabati 23 Julii 1558, obtulitque premisso Reverendo D. Johanni Paulo copiam predictam ad eius requisitionem cum dictis sigillatis penes me existentibus, auscultari facere. In quorum fidem, Ego Hieronimus predictus, rogatus et requisitus, signo et attestatione meis solitis signavi.

[altra mano]

Nos, Frater Andreas de Cattaneis, prepositus Prepositure Sancti Marini, Ordinis Humiliatorum in terra Crema et in hac parte subexegutor vigore clausule generalis ceterum in processu fulminato super litteris Reverendissimi Domini Legati Appostolici Venetiis comorantis, confirmationis ellectionis facte de persona magnifice D. Genebrie Luciage in matrem et gubernatricem principalem et generalem puellarum et Societatis Sancte Ursule Brixie pro parte earumdem puellarum et Societatis ellectus et assumptus, cuiusquidem processus hic ob illius prolixitatem inseri omittimus, defferentes tamen copiam illam petentibus et de iure habere debentibus, petentium quidem sumptibus et expensis, Reverendo D. Johanni Paulo de Curte, canonico ecclesie Brixiensis alias per quasdam pro infrascriptis gubernatore asserte Societatis Sancte Ursule Brixie se gerente, ut dicitur, comissario seu exegutore ellecto et assumpto, ceterisque aliis iudicibus, exequtoribus, subexequtoribus aut conservatoribus, quocumque nomine censeantur et quacumque auctoritate fungentibus, quibus littere nostre presentate fuerint, salutem in Domino et nostris huiusmodi imo verius appostolicis conservatoriis et inhibitoriis firmiter obedire mandatis, significamus vobis, vestrum cuilibet, quemadmodum his diebus proxime elapsis, pro parte puellarum Societatis Sancte Ursule Brixie, nobis presentate fuerunt littere confirmationis ellectionis magnifice D. Genebrie Luciagi in matrem et gubernatricem generalem antedicte Societatis, concesse per Reverendissimum Dominum tunc Legatum Appostolicum Venetiis comorantem sub datum Venetiis apud Sanctum Benedictum anno Incarnationis Dominice 1555, XVI calendas octobris, Pontificatus Sanctissimi nostri Patris et Domini nostri, Domini Pauli, divina providentia Pape quarti, anno primo, una cum processu superinde fulminato per Reverendissimum D. Vincentium de Bonis, prepositum ecclesie Brixiensis, unum ex conservatoribus et deffensoribus per easdem litteras deputatum, subscripto per Ludovicum Urgnano, notarium Brixie, sub die primo, mensis decembris, dicti anni 1555 et nobis expositum fuit quod vos, Reverende D. Paule, sub pretextu cuiusdam pretense vestre sententie nulle et priusve ac nulliter et iniuste late iam ad Sanctam Sedem Appostolicam medio nullitatis et appellationis devolute, non cessatis ipsam magnificam dominam Genebriam et puellas dicte Societatis molestare et inquietare, non permittendo ipsas quiete et pacifice, ut convenit, dicta ellectione et bonorum administratione ac dictarum litterarum appostolicarum beneficiis uti et gaudere, nonnullisque alii de et super dicto gubernerio illamque molestant et impediunt, pretextu cuiusdam asserte conservatorie seu exegutionis. Ideo a nobis petitum fuit ut de efficacis deffensionis presidio assistentes non permittamus illas a quoque aliqualiter desuper molestari de et super premissis, vel inquietari, sed faciamus illas beneficio dictarum litterarum pacifice uti frui et gaudere; nos volentes, ut nostro incumbit officio, pro viribus taliter insistere, ut ipsa magnifica domina Genebria et puelle dictarum litterarum beneficio utantur et pacifice gaudeant et a quibusque molestatoribus conserventur.

Ideo, tenore presentium, auctoritate appostolica, qua in hac parte sufficienter muniti sumus, Vobis, Reverendo D. Johanni Paulo ceterisque aliis molestatoribus quocumque nomine censeantur et quacumque profulgeant dignitate, in virtute Sancte obedientie et sub excommunicationis pena ac trecentorum ducattorum auri, armamento Illustrissimi Ducalis Dominii Venetie in subsidium catholice fidei, applicamus penis, quas ipso facto contra facientes, seu non parentes, vos incurrere volumus et ex nunc prout ex tunc per presentes quemlibet inobidientem seu non parentem incurisse declaramus trina tamen prius canonica monitione precedente, precipimus et mandamus quatenus visis seu vobis et cuilibet vestrum presentatis presentibus, vos, D. Johannes Paule, omne id et totum quod per vos factum fuit contra ipsas dominam Genebriam et puellas casasse et anullasse et penitus revocasse velitis et debeatis et quilibet alter vestrum qui aliquid contra ipsas fecerit pariter sub eisdem penis revocare velit et debeat et amodo in antea per vos vel interpositas personas, quoquomodo predictas magnificam dominam Genebriam et puellas molestare, inquietare aut perturbare audeatis vel presumatis, aut quilibet vestrum audeat vel presumat et de revocationibus ipsis per documenta publica in tertio tridui fidem faciatis, quod si secus per vos aut aliquem vestrum factum fuerit aut fieri contigerit, nos contra vos et vestrum quemlibet, qui inobedientes sive inobediens fuerint sive fuerit, ultra penas predictas ad alia graviora iuris remedia, iustitia mediante, procedemus vobis, nec aliq(...) nostrum ulterius citatis monitis neque requisitis, nisi forte in valvis ecclesie maioris huius terre Creme, si id opus esse duxerimus; contumacia aut absentia vestra aut alicuius vestrum nisi aliquo non obstante, nihilominus quicquid per vos factum invenerimus contra tenorem presentis mandati ac comissionis vobis facte, id totum revocare curabimus prout et tenorem presentium revocamus ac nullius valoris esse declaramus. In quorum fidem de quarum presentatione relationi cuiuslibet iurati aut alterius cum iuramento seu instrumento publico desuper conficiendo plenam dabimus fidem. Datum Creme, in edibus nostris ecclesie Sancti Marini, die sabati vigesima tertia mense Julii anni 1558.

Frater Andreas Cattaneus, Prepositus et Sube[xe]cutor, subscripsit

[signum sigilli]

Dominicus Dro, notarius Creme collationavi de mandato

# 32. Testamento di Ginevra Luzzago

Milano, Archivio di Stato, Fondo di Religione, registro n. 223, «Brescia S. Affra alias S. Salvatore (Lateranensi)», ff. 66v-67r. Inedito.

Testamentum magnificae dominae Genebriae de Luzagis

In Christi nomine. Cum nichil sit certius morte et nichil incertius hora mortis, temporaliumque rerum varius sit cursus, ideoque magnifica domina Genebria, filia quondam spectabilis domini Hieronimi de Ripis et relicta q. spect. iuris utriusque doctoris D. Alexandri de Luzago civis et habit. Brixiae, sana mente et intellectu licet corpore languens, volens de bonis suis disponere ne inter posteros suos lis oriatur, per hoc praesens testamentum nuncupativum sine scriptis et in his scriptis, fecit, disposuit, legavit, instituit et hordinavit in hunc modum et formam ut infra, videlicet:

Inprimis Animam suam omnipotenti Deo et beatissimae Virgini Mariae, ac toti curiae caelesti humiliter comendavit.

Item legavit et voluit corpus suum sepelliri in ecclesia Sanctae Affrae civitatis Brixiae.

Item legavit, et iure legati reliquit ecclesiae seu monasterio Sanctae Affrae praedictae Brixiae libras treginta sex planetas, sibi dandas per infrascriptum mag.m D. Hieronimum eius filium et heredem, quolibet anno perpetuis temporibus, pro quibus voluit et mandavit quod reverendus dominus Praepositus et Canonici eiusdem monasterii perpetuis et continuatis temporibus teneantur manutenere unum idoneum sacerdotem in dicto loco, qui habeat legere Regulam mulieribus seu puellis Societatis Sanctae Ursulae, et illis divina ministeria et officia ministrare iuxta consuetum; et ulterius quolibet anno celebrari facere unam missam solemnem cum divinis officiis in ecclesia praedicta; et quolibet die vigesimo septimo ianuarii perpetuis temporibus, in remedium animae ipsius magnificae dominae testatricis, sub poena privationis praesentis legati; et casu quo dictae puellae cessarent a loco praedicto Sanctae Affrae, quod praedicti domini Canonici teneantur singulo anno, in die mortuorum, accendi facere duas candelas cereas albas super sepulcro quondam reverendae dominae Sororis Angelae in dicta ecclesia existenti; a quo tamen legato et obligatione voluit et vult praedicta mag.ca domina testatrix quod praedictus et infrascriptus mag.s dominus eius Heres possit et valeat se in totum liberare ob eius beneplacitum, solvendo dicto monasterio, seu reverendis dominis Canonicis eiusdem, libras septemcentum viginti planetas, quas libras septemcentum viginti planetas dicto casu voluit praedictos reverendos dominos Canonicos teneri et obligatos esse investire in uno fundo stabili idoneo, et equivalenti, ac cauto et siccurro, pro manutentione et observatione ac conservatione et firmitate omnium et singulorum in praesenti legato contentorum.

Item legavit, et iure legati reliquit dictae ecclesiae seu monasterio Sanctae Affrae Brixiae libras tres planetas, pro quibus teneantur dicti reverendi domini Canonici celebrare in ecclesia praedicta missas sancti Gregori in remedium animae ipsius mag.ae dominae testatricis, pro una vice tantum post mortem ipsius.

Item legavit, et iure legati reliquit scolae sacratissimi Corporis Christi ecclesiae Sanctae Mariae de Chalcharia Brixiae, libras treginta planetas sibi dandas per dictum infrascriptum mag.m dominum eius Heredem, post mortem ipsius dominae testatricis, pro una vice tantum, pro quibus in dicta ecclesia debeant celebrari aliae missae sancti Gregori pro una vice in remedium ut supra.

Item legavit et caetera ut supra reverendis dominis Fratribus Sancti Joseph Brixiae libras tres planetas pro una vice sibi dandas ut supra, et in remedium ut supra, pro quibus teneantur celebrare alias missas Sancti Gregori pro una vice ut supra.

Item similiter legavit reverendis dominis Fratribus Sancti Barnabae Brixiae libras tres planetas sibi dandas ut supra, pro quibus teneantur sibi celebrare alias missas sancti Gregori et caetera ut supra.

Item legavit, et iure legati reliquit D. Angelae, eius domicillae, libras quinquaginta planetas sibi dandas per praedictum mag.m dominum eius Heredem post mortem ipsius dominae testatricis, ut supra [leggasi: *ultra*] salarium suum in remedium animae suae.

Item similiter legavit D. Antoniae, ancillae suae, libras viginti planetas ultra salarium suum sibi dandum, et caetera ut supra.

Item similiter legavit D. Florae, servienti in eius domo, libras tres planetas ultra salarium suum sibi dandum et caetera ut supra.

Item similiter legavit Deffendo, factori suo in rure, libras tres planetas ultra salarium suum sibi dandum et caetera ut supra. Item similiter legavit Paulo della Magna, servitori in dicta domo, libras tres planetas ultra salarium suum sibi dandum et caetera ut supra. Item similiter legavit Joanni Mariae, repetitori in dicta domo, libras tres planetas ultra salarium suum sibi dandum et caetera ut supra. Item similiter legavit Bertholino servitori ut supra soldos treginta planetas ultra salarium suum sibi dandum et caetera ut supra.

Item similiter legavit D. Mariae, nutrici in dicta domo, libras novem planetas ultra salarium suum sibi dandum et caetera ut supra.

Item similiter legavit Lucretiae, cognominatae Menica, soldos treginta planetas ultra suum salarium sibi dandum et caetera ut supra.

Item legavit, et iure legati reliquit D. Julio Balteo, civi et habitatori Brixiae, libras sexaginta quinque planetas, exigendas a mag.ca D. Chaterina Foresta eius debitrice, pro benemeritis ipsius D. Julii.

Item legavit, et iure legati reliquit D. Luciae, eius filiae legittimae et naturali, et uxori D. Joannis Jacobi Vasiani de Desenzano, libras mille planetas sibi dandas per dictum mag.m dominum eius Heredem ad sui beneplacitum, et in pluribus vicibus, infra annos sex continuos proxime futuros post obitum ipsius mag.ae dominae testatricis, de quibus dicta D. Lucia disponere possit ad sui libitum, et quod dictus eius maritus in eiis se aliquo modo impedire nec inmissere non possit.

Item legavit, et iure legati reliquit D. Paulae, similiter eius filiae, libras mille planetas sibi dandas per dictum mag.m eius Heredem in pluribus vicibus, et in necessi-

tatibus suis, in quibus D. Ludovicus Soraga maritus suus se modo aliquo inpedire non possit.

Item legavit, et iure legati reliquit dictae D. Paulae eius filiae, usufructum domus ipsius mag.ae dominae testatricis sitae in civitate Brixiae, in contrata fontis dulcianorum, toto tempore vitae suae, salvo tamen et reservato [67<sup>r</sup>] legato infrascriptae camerae, et hoc casu quo non posset habitare cum dicto D. Ludovico marito suo, vel cum praedicto mag.co domino eius filio et herede, nec non et usufructum duarum capsarum interstatarum.

Item legavit, et iure legati reliquit, D. Andreae et Juliae et Juliae [sic] sororibus de Zabellis, puellis Societatis praedictae, usufructum unius camerae quae magis placuerit dictae D. Paulae ipsius filiae, in domo praedicta, toto tempore earum vitae, et donec perseveraverint seu perseverabont [sic] ad audiendam Regulam praedictam, et recipienda divina offitia et ministeria in dicta ecclesia Sanctae Affrae iuxta con-

suetum; et ipsis cesantibus, eas in totum privavit et privat dicto usufructu.

Item legavit et iure legati reliquit, ac voluit, iussit et mandavit quod in dicta domo contratae fontis dulcianorum, debeant recepi et hospitari de puellis Societatis praedictae, donec eiis provideant de aliquo recapito, et ne in sinistrum pergant; quam domum voluit praedicta domina testatrix remanere perpetuo obligatam ad servitutem praedictam, et ad benefitium et comodum dictarum puellarum Societatis praedictae, quae magis placebunt dictae D. Paulae eius filiae, cum pacto et condictione quod dictae puellae perseverent ad audiendum Regulam praedictam, et divina ministeria sussipiendum in dicta ecclesia Sanctae Affrae, et a sacerdote praedicto; et praesens legatum sic illis fecit et facit, donec et quousque perseveraverint, et perseverabont ut supra; et ipsis puellis cesantibus, legatum istud revocavit, et ex nunc prout ex tunc, et e converso penitus anullavit et anullat; a qua tamen servitute et obligatione, praedicta mag.ca domina testatrix voluit et vult quod praedictus mag.s dominus eius Heres possit et valeat quandocumque se et dictam domum liberare, solvendo dictae Societati, seu puellis eiusdem perseverantibus ad dictam ecclesiam Sanctae Affrae et non aliter, libras sex centum planetas in totum.

Item legavit, et iure legati reliquit dictae Societati, seu puellis eiusdem, totum creditum quod habet cum eiis, occasione expensarum per ipsam factarum tam in litibus quam aliter; pro quibus noluit modo aliquo ipsas conveniri a dicto eius Herede donec accesserint, et perseveraverint ad dictam ecclesiam Sanctae Affrae ut su-

pra, et aliter non.

Item praedicta mag.ca domina testatrix declaravit ac voluit et mandavit quod illae librae trecentum viginti planetae, quae ex dispositione quondam D. Thomae eius filii, et ad complacentiam praedictae mag.ae dominae testatricis dispositae fuerunt in Societatem praedictam, rationibus et causis et ut latius constat instrumento rogato per me Hieronimum Zanettum notarium infrascriptum, sub die ultimo novembris 1555, intelligantur esse et sint dispositae ad beneficium dictarum puellarum Societatis praedictae quae perseverabont ad ecclesiam praedictam Sanctae Affrae iuxta earum consuetum, ac modis et formis suprascriptis et non aliter.

Item legavit, et iure legati reliquit, D. Hippolitae et Mariae, filiabus suis legittimis, libras trecentum planetas pro singula earum, sibi dandas infra annos quatuor continuos proxime futuros post eius mortem, de quibus disponere possint ad earum libitum. Ita quod spectabilis iuris utriusque doctor D. Christophorus Pallatius, et D. Octavianus Ugonius mariti sui in eiis se aliquo modo impedire non possint. In omnibus autem aliis suis bonis, mobilibus et immobilibus, iuribus, rationibus et ac-

tionibus nominibus debitorum, et specialiter in livellis, sibi Heredem universalem instituit et esse voluit, praefatum mag.m D. Hieronimum Luzagum, eius filium legittimum et naturalem, volens et mandans hoc esse suum ultimum testamentum, et ultimam voluntatem, quod et quam voluit valere et tenere iure testamenti seu codicillorum, et quatenus non valeret iure testamenti vel codicillorum voluit valere, et tenere iure donationis causa mortis, et alterius cuiuscunque ultimae voluntatis ac omnibus meliori modo, iure, via, forma, causa, quibus melius et vallidius valere et tenere possit; cassans, revocans et anullans omne et quodcunque aliud testamentum seu voluntatem, quod et quae reperirentur hinc retro per eam conditum seu conditam, dicens se non recordari aliud vel aliam condidisse, et, si recordaretur, hic mentionem fecisset specialem, volens praesens caeteris quibuscunque praevalere.

Actum et conditum fuit suprascriptum testamentum, et ultima voluntas per praedictam mag.m D. Genebriam testatricem existentem in lecto in quadam camera superiori domorum suae habitationis sitae in civitate Brixiae, in contrata Merchati Novi, et per me notarium, ipsa mandante, publicatum anno a nativitate Domini nostri Iesu Christi MDLVIII, indictione prima, die XVIII Septembris. Praesentibus reverendo domino D. Cipriano de Pontecarali praeposito Canonicorum Regularium Sanctae Affrae Brixiae, rev. domino D. Joanne Francisco de Seramondis de Brixia ordinis praedicti, rev. D. presbitero Joanne de Antolinis curatore ecclesiae Sanctae Mariae de Calcharia Brixiae, spectabili artium et medicinae doctore D. Hieronimo Gardono, et Francisco de Cinaliis, civibus et habitatoribus Brixiae, D. Augustino filio quondam magistri Mapheii de Galeatiis pictore, et D. Thoma quondam D. Antonii de Bargnano notario, cive et habitatore Brixiae, omnibus testibus a praedicta mag.ca domina testatrice rogatis, notisque et vocatis. Quae pariter rogavit me, Hieronimum Zanettum notarium infrascriptum, publicum conficere instrumentum ad laudem sapientis.

## 33. Atto notarile 19 novembre 1559

Brescia, Archivio di Stato, Fondo Notarile, notaio Girolamo Zanetti, filza 1695. Inedito.

Datio in solutum magnifici Domini Hieronimi Luzaghi Societati Sanctae Ursulae Brixiae.

In Christi nomine 1559, indictione secunda, die decimonono novembris, in quadam camera superiori domorum habitationis infrascriptae magnificae dominae Helisabet de Pratho sitae super Plateam de Dom civitatis Brixiae, praesentibus Bartholomeo, quondam Gabrini de Tabulatiis de Gambara, successore infrascripti spectabilis domini Jacobi Chizolae, Bartholomeo, quondam Joannis Balzarotti de Sonico Valtrompiae, successore infrascripti spectabilis domini Christophori, et Joanne Angelo, filio Bertoletti de Sabusinis Vallis Sabii, successore infrascripti spectabilis domini Gabrielis, testibus. Cum facto diligenti calculo per et intra Societatem seu Confraternitatem Sanctae Ursulae Brixiae, seu, et pro ea agentes ex una, et magnificum dominum Hieronimum de Luzaghis, civem et habitatorem Brixiae, filium et heredem quondam magnificae dominae Genebriae, olim dictae Societatis matris et gubernatricis, ex alia,

de omnibus et quibuscumque per ipsam quondam magnificam dominam Genebriam gestis et administratis et ad eius manus perventis, habitis et receptis de bonis seu pecuniis ac introitibus et creditis dictae Societatis pariterque per ipsam solutis et expositis pro dicta Societate, ut constat iuribus et libris dictae Societatis ac predictae quondam magnificae dominae Genebriae ac diversis instrumentis «computatisque> et maxime computato instromento dationis in solutum, alias factum per dictum magnificum dominum Hieronimum dictae Societati, rogatum per me notarium infrascriptum sub die ultimo novembris 1555, ad quod et cetera, etiam libris centum duabus planetis pro livellis annorum duorum pretiorum exactis, a quondam domino Joanne Antonio Castrino livellario dictae Societatis ut in dicta in solutum datione, computatisque ceteris et quibuscumque aliis hinc inde habitis, datis et receptis, repertum fuerit reverendissimum magnificum dominum Hieronimum restare debitorem in totum in 152 de libris ducentum septuaginta novem, soldis sex, denariis octo planetis, prout ita verum fuisse et esse partes infrascriptae, una in presentia alterius (...) et e contrario agentes et infra dixerunt et confessae fuerunt repraesentantes et cetera.

Ideo spectabilis nobilis doctor dominus Christoforus de Pallatio, civis et habitator Brixiae, praesens et agens nomine et vice praedicti magnifici domini Hieronimi Luzaghi sororii sui, pro quo est ita quod est secundum intelligitur ratificatum et cetera, volens satisfacere dictae Societati omni meliore modo in solutum et solutionis nomine dictarum librarum ducentum «septuaginta novem, soldorum sex, denariorum octo» planetarum, dedit, tradidit et assignavit magnificae dominae Blancae de Portulacis, generali matri et gubernatrici Societatis praedictae praesenti et cetera, nec non et infrascriptis magnificis matronis et mulieribus Societatis praedictae, more earum solito capitulariter in dicto loco congregatis, et asserentibus se repraesentare totam seu maiorem partem dictae Societatis et capitulum eiusdem, praesentibus ac etiam magnificis et existentibus nobili doctore domino Jacobo de Chizolis et Gabrieli de Botasiis, «domino Laurentio Coradello», civibus et habitatoribus Brixiae, dictae Societatis prottectoribus et conservatoribus ac domino Antonio Matheo de Moris et domino Juliano de Lombardis, dictae Societatis rectoribus,

magnifica D. Blancha de Portulachis, mater et gubernatrix, magnifica D. Veronica de Butiis, magnifica D. Helisabet de Prato, D. Leonella de Pedezochis, D. Nativitas de Bargnanis, D. Paula de Pischeriis pro se et D. Laura eius sorore, D. Martha de Butiis, D. Aurelia de Pugnatoribus, D. Antonia de Hasta, D. Laura de Isipinis, D. Anita de Fischettis, D. Blancha de Seraphinis, D. Margaritta de Vertua, D. Margarita de Rima, D. Agnes de Chiodarolis, Maria de Zenuchinis, D. Scholastica de Zenuchinis, Dominica de plebe Abioni, Antonia, ancilla dominae Helisabet, Petra de Theutonicis, Marta de Aratoribus, Antonia de Trentinis, Augustina de Cacettis, D. Helisabet de Stramazis, Margarita Cremonensis, Julia de Besenzanis, Cipriana de Mortariis, Catharina de Bertalis, Anzola de Pontoliis, Anuntiata de Bovegno, Clara de Desanzanis, Martha de Castiono, Paula de Castiono, Anuntiata Boni de Homis, Martha de Capirolis, Helisabet de Capirolis, Cecilia de Albricis, Flos de Orisis, Maria de Pedrochis, Catharina de Paterno, D. Vitoria de Grilis, Angelica de Paterno, Martha de Paterno, Francisca de Grilis, Francisca de Cesano, Picha de Prandaliis, Maria de (...), Laura de Panzoliis, Innocentia de Brixianis, Antonia de Salodio, Joanna de Salodio, Magdalena de Paschis, Anzola de Serlis, Dominica de Casalibus de Homis, D. Barbara de Isipinis, D. Theodora de Isipinis, pro se et domina Antonia earum sorore, Francisca de Venetiis, Lutia de Venetiis, Peregrina de Seniga, D. Magdalena de Miliis, Catherina de Claris pro se et D. Ludovica de Vailate, Dominica de Supraponte, Sancta de Valtrompia, Peregrina de Albricis, Andreana de Rumano et Maria de Martinellis;

praesentibus Bartholomeo, quondam Gelmini de Tabulatiis de Gambara, successore praedicti spectabilis domini Jacobi Chizolae; Bartholomeo, quondam Johannis Balzarotti de Sonico Valtrompiae, successore praedicti spectabilis domini Christophori; Johanne Angelo, filio Bertoletti de Sabusinis de Valle Sabii, successore praedicti spectabilis domini Gabrielis [lacuna]; et quilibet ipsorum praesentibus, repraesentantibus ac agentibus et stipulantibus nomine et vice dictae Societatis et Confraternitatis Sanctae Ursulae et pro successoribus suis et cetera nominatim tantam partem dominii directi et proprietatis capientem summam dictam libras ducentum «septuaginta novem, soldos sex, denarios octo» planetas, pro sorte cum iure exigendi de livello, singulo anno, in quolibet die Carnis previi aut eius octava, libras quattuordecim planetas «a filiis» dicti quondam domini Joannis Antonii de Castrinis et nepotibus suis ex quondam domino Francisco eius fratre debitoribus et livellariis, ut latius constat in dicto instrumento dationis in solutum ac instrumento investiturae, rogato per quondam dominum Ciprianum de Massariis notarium, sub die 11 februarii 1505, ad quae et cetera. Salvo quod pro propria vice tantum in die Carnis privii (...) exigere possint dictum livellum (pro ratha temporis exacti post hanc cessionem cum pottestate dictos de Castrinis cogendi ad affranchationem ad libitum dictae Societatis, ad hunc et dando et ponendo et constituendo ita quod et cetera et quos de Castrinis idem spectabilis dominus Christophorus agens et cetera promittit manutenere bonos, veros et exigibiles debitores et livellarios ac de emictione et legitima deffensione (...) quapropter praemissa magnifica domina Blancha mater et dictae omnes matronae et mulieres Societatis praedictae et praemissi magnifici domini eius prottectores et conservatores et quilibet eorum agentes ut supra liberaverunt et absolverunt ac liberant et absolvunt praemissum spectabilem dominum Christophorum praesentem et per ipsum praemissum magnificum dominum Hieronimum et cetera, advocatis libris ducentum septuaginta novem, soldis sex, denariis octo planetis et ab omni eo et toto quod eidem magnifico domino Hieronimo petere possent, poterant et potuissent vigore praemissorum, eidem facientes legitima stipulatione sententialem et generalissimam liberationem, quotationem et pactum de ulterioris quicquam non petendo, ita quod comprendat tam detracta et specificata, quam non, ac si de unaquaque re esset facta specialis mentio et ne aliqua dicere valeant. Praemissarum quarum mulierum dictae Societatis nomina sunt et cetera.

Rogatum per me Hieronimum Zanettum

## 34. Piccolo Ufficio di S. Orsola

Città del Vaticano, Archivio Segreto Vaticano, S.C. Rituum, *Processus* 339, ff. 486v-491v. Cfr. supra, parte III, cap. IV, 1.b

### PETIT OFFICE

de Saincte Ursule Vierge et Martyre, avec la commémoration de la Bien-heureuse Angelle de Merici, Fondatrice du Sainct Ordre de la Congrégation de la susdite Saincte Ursule.

#### A MATINES

Pater noster, Ave, etc. Credo in Deum, etc. Domine labia mea aperies, Et os meum annunciabit laudem tuam. Deus in adiutorium, etc. Gloria Patri et Filio, etc.

#### Hymne

Plaudite nunc animae Christo consecratae, Quia regnant in caelis Virgines beatae. Quarum imitatrices ut possitis esse, Tam constanti pectore mundo datis vale.

#### Oraison

Omnipotens sempiterne Deus, qui Ecclesiam tuam novo semper foetu multiplicas, quique ideo constantissimae Martyris et purissimae Virginis tuae Sanctae Ursulae congregationem ministerio Beatae famulae tuae Angellae in tuo servitio misericorditer adunasti: concede propitius, ut quarum cultum, moresque pios sincero fervore amplecti imitarique peroptamus, harum etiam meritis et intercessione ingruentes saevientis hostis insidias superare, cunctasque fluctuantis saeculi vanitates constanter contemnere valeamus. Per Dominum nostrum Iesum Christum filium tuum, etc.

### A LAUDES

Deus in adiutorium, etc. Gloria Patri, etc.

#### Hymne

En Ursula nobilis virgo generosa, Spernens mundi labilis sceptra fastuosa. Necnon matrimonii dona gaudiosa, Angelorum possidet regna gloriosa.

Ant. Ursula ex prudentibus, praefulsit Virgo prudens: simulque cum sociabus, pro Christo mori studens. Matth. 25.

Vers. Adducentur Regi virgines post eam.
Resp. Proximae eius afferentur tibi in laetitia. Psal. 44.

#### Oraison

Deus qui in Ecclesia tua devotam Sanctae Ursulae Virginis et Martyris tuae Societatem, in teneris iuvenculis tibi maxime placentibus, per Beatam ancillam tuam Angellam clementer et mirabiliter suscitasti; praesta, quaesumus, ut quarum, solidas virtutes imitari conamur in terris, etiam harum precibus in felici aeternae gloriae consortio, tua beatifica visione gaudere mereamur in Caelis. Per Dominum nostrum, etc.

#### A PRIME

Deus in adiutorium, etc. Gloria Patri, etc.

### Hymne

Te sequuntur Comites Ursula benigna,
Per sagittas et cruces tyrannorum arma,
Et securae prodeunt te duce devota,
Nec propter Christi fidem verentur tormenta.

Ant. Hortatur haec cum virgines, lucis aeternae socias, ne Christo sint degeneres, qui ad crucem vocat sponsas. Ma. 16.

Vers. Virgines enim sunt.

Resp. Et sequuntur agnum quocumque ierit. Apoc. 19.

#### Oraison

Esto nobis, Domine, humilibus ancillis tuis supplicantibus contra omnia mundi inquinamenta praesidium singulare; ut quae spretis carnis illecebris, in tuo servitio sub vexillis congregationis Sanctae Virginis et Martyris tuae Ursulae per Beatam famulam tuam Angellam erectae jugiter militamus, etiam earum patrocinante subsidio, tuaque juvante gratia infames saeculi spurcitias constanter et generose fugiamus. Per Dominum nostrum, etc.

#### A TIERCE

Deus in adiutorium, etc. Gloria Patri, etc.

### Hymne

Furore concitato dum saevit tyrannus,
Teneris iuvenculis Christus praebet manus,
Pro cuius fide sancta audent sic pugnare,
Et in patientia hostes superare.

Antien. Caelestem Sponsum virgines Ursula docet amare: quae regias propagines pro Christo vult calcare. Sapient. 7.

Vers. Pulchra est casta generatio cum claritate. Resp. Immortalis est memoria illius. Sap. 4.

#### Oraison

Ne despicias quaesumus, Domine, supplices tuas: ut quae in pietate et misericordia tua humiliter confidentes, mortifera huius saeculi oblectamenta pro tuo amore contempserunt, ut in Societate Sanctae Ursulae Virginis et Martyris tuae per Beatam Angellam renovata tibi fideliter deserviant; etiam harum intercedentibus meritis improbas circumeuntis inimici tentationes superare, et ad te suum maximum praemiatorem victrices valeant pervenire. Per Dominum nostrum, etc.

### A SEXTE

Deus in adiutorium, etc. Gloria Patri, etc.

### Hymne

O quam magna dignitas vobis est concessa, Quibus Sanctae Ursulae charitas impressa Viget in praecordiis; morte singulari Devicistis daemonem atque mente pari.

Antien. Mortem pro Christi nomine, contemnens sacra Virgo: multas, suo iuvamine, nubit aeterno sponso. Ps. 44.

Vers. Afferentur virgines in exultatione. Resp. Adducentur in templum Regis. Psalm. 144 [sic].

#### Oraison

Propitiare Domine supplicationibus nostris, et intercedente Sancta Ursula Virgine et Martyre tua, mentibus nostris devotionis affectum infunde singularem: ut cuius congregationis a Beata Angella stabilitae professionem pio fervore amplectimur, ipsa quoque precibus adiuvante et in isto tuo servitio fideliter maneamus, et in arctissima mandatorum tuorum observatione multipliciter proficiamus. Per Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum, etc.

#### A NONE

Deus in adiutorium, etc. Gloria Patri, etc.

### Hymne

Prima subit omnium alias monendo Ursulae Sociarum pectus confortando. Et tyranni recipi iaculum tam forte, Quod emisit animam, sed felici morte.

Antien. Ursula sic iuvenculas, beat forti victoria: quas docet hic discipulas, trina domare praetia. Ioan.

Vers. Istae sunt quae laverunt stolas suas.
Resp. Et dealbaverunt eas in sanguine Agni. Apoc. 7.

#### Oraison

Exaudi preces nostras omnipotens Deus: et nos famulas tuas, quas a saeculi vanitate conversas ad congregationem Sanctae Ursulae Virginis et Martyris tuae per fidelem ancillam tuam Beatam Angellam institutam, generose et misericorditer accendis, caelesti protege benignus auxilio: ut pectoribus nostris clementer illapsus, gratiam, qua in te perseveremus infundas, et post huius vitae decursum in caelestis regni portione, nos tuo vultu perenniter constituas fruituras. Per Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum, etc.

### A VESPRES

Deus in adiutorium, etc. Gloria Patri, etc.

### Hymne

Eia dulcis Ursula gemma pretiosa, Cui carnis foeditas extitit exosa, Felix tuus exitus, morsque gratiosa, Salvet nos ab Inferi morte dolorosa, Iam beata frueris requie cupita, Inter Sponsi brachia dulciter sopita, Eiusque Spiritui firmiter unita, Ab eodem percipis oscula mellita.

Ant. Mundi neglecto foedere, spreto nativo genere: cum puellis in gloria, victrix triumphat Ursula. Psal. 44.

Vers. Transivimus per ignem et aquam. Resp. Et induxisti nos in refrigerium. Psal. 64.

#### Oraison

Subveniat nobis clementissime Deus misericordia tua: et intercedente Sancta Ursula cuius congregationem tibi placitam per Beatam Angellam erigere dignatus es, animorum nostrorum potenter medere languoribus; ut efficacis gratiae tuae benedictione percepta, et iugiter tuo nomini obsequium nostrum in cordis puritate et sinceritate impendamus, et fideliter in tuo servitio firma pectoris propositione maneamus. Per Dominum nostrum, etc.

#### A COMPLIES

Converte nos Deus, etc. Deus in adiutorium, etc. Gloria Patri, etc.

### Hymne

Nunc cessarunt gemitus, et planctus dolorum. Ursulanae sociae cum itis ad Tronum, Coniunctae perenniter choris Angelorum, Nuptae felicissimo Regi saeculorum. Ant. Princeps sacrarum virginum, singulari custodia perducit ad Christum Sponsum, puellarum collegia. Psal. 44.

Vers. Domine apud te est fons vitae.
Resp. Et in lumine tuo videbimus lumen. Psal. 35.

#### Oraison

Da nobis quaesumus Domine Deus noster constantem in tuo famulatu voluntatem: ut qui Societatem Sanctae Ursulae Virginis et Martyris tuae per Beatam Angellam abundanter plantare voluisti, et quam non desinis continuis irrigare favoribus, ita etiam nos benedicas, quatenus huic vocationi firmiter haereamus: ut ab ea nullis tentationibus divellamur: Et quas fecisti in tuo servitio unanimiter concordes, redde nos etiam in fide stabiles, et in opere efficaces. Per Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum Filium tuum, qui tecum vivit et regnat in unitate Spiritus Sancti Deus. Per omnia saecula saeculorum. Amen.

#### RECOMMENDATION

Frequentemus hoc canticum, o Sorores piae, Ne nos frangatae dium poenae huius viae, Quia nos omnes laetantes in hac melodia, Suscipiant post vitam Iesus et Ursula. Amen.

# 35. Iconografia mericiana a Desenzano e Verona

Città del Vaticano, Archivio Segreto Vaticano, S.C.Rituum, Processus 340, ff. 381v-384r; 397r-398r; 401r-403r; 416v-417v. Inedito.

## 1. DESENZANO. Descrizioni del notaio Giuseppe Bovio

## a) Nell'Oratorio della Compagnia di S. Orsola

In questa chiesa vi sono due altari: uno è il maggiore, l'altro è laterale al primo, alla parte dell'Epistola. All'altar maggiore vi è un'ancona dipinta in tela la di cui altezza è di piedi sette e la larghezza è di piedi cinque, misura di Verona; è contorniata da cornice fatta con intaglio, le di cui foglie sono tutte dorate ed il fondo verde. La figura principale è quella di S. Orsola vestita in foggia reale, o principesca, con corona in capo, avendo paludamento che pende dagli omeri, e nella sinistra mano sostenendo lo [382'] stendardo bianco con croce rossa e stringendo palma; lateralmente dall'una e dall'altra parte vi sono dipinte molte vergini, che rappresentano le compagne di S. Orsola vestite a varie maniere e di vari colori, ed hanno nelle mani palme; genuflessa avanti S. Orsola si vede una vergine vestita differentemente dalle altre perché ha il capo ornato di veli bianchi come le monache, con stringicapo e sottogola; e sopra di tali veli ha un altro velo grande, pure bianco, che copre la sommità del capo da cui pende e va a coprire quasi tutta la persona, i lembi anteriori

del quale passano per le braccia, e le mani escono da medesimi lembi con qualche parte de bracci, tenendole ambidue giunte in modo supplichevole. La veste o tonaca che si osserva sotto il velo è negra, stretta da cintura da cui pende il rosario o corona di Maria Vergine. Niuna vergine, né pur S. Orsola, ha raggi o laureola, e così neppure la sopradescritta vergine genuflessa; la quale altro non può rappresentare che la B. Angela Merici in atto di esser mandata da S. Orsola ad instituire la Congregazione delle vergini, come l'ha instituita, sotto il titolo di Compagnia di S. Orsola.

Nell'antedetto altare laterale vi è un'ancona dipinta in tela, nella di cui sommità è dipinta Maria Vergine tenendo in braccio il suo figlio Gesù Cristo, inalzata dalle nubi ed attorniata da angeli; abbasso sono dipinti S. Antonio [382<sup>v</sup>] con abito de Minori conventuali alla parte dell'Evangelio; ivi pure S. Francesco Xaverio dietro a cui vi è un angeletto col giglio. Alla parte dell'Epistola S. Lorenzo martire con dalmatica rossa fiorata a oro, appresso cui un angioletto con palma e graticola, e la immagine di una Santa con il capo velato alla maniera delle monache, e sopra le spalle un coprimento nero che discende verso i gomiti e rappresenta quello che noi chiamiamo rocchetto da pellegrino, e poi vestita tutta di una tonaca di color biggio alle maniere delle terziarie francescane, cinta da corda o funicella come sono cinte le terziarie suddette, da cui pende corona della B. Vergine Maria, coi piedi scalzi muniti però de' sandali alla maniera de' Cappuccini. La figura è genuflessa, e si appoggia ad un bordone, il quale ha appresso il suo braccio sinistro. Questa immagine sembra pure che rappresenti la B. Angela per il modo del suo vestimento, come è stato da me descritto. L'ancona è alta cinque piedi e mezzo, e larga piedi tre ed oncie otto veronesi. È osservabile che l'immagini di Maria Vergine e quella di Gesù Cristo anno raggi; le altre tutte, anche quella che rappresenta la B. Angela, han'il capo circondato da laureola.

Il quadro pendente sopra l'uscio per cui si entra nella sacristia ha una cornice di noce assai antica; l'altezza è di piedi tre oncie dieci, e la larghezza è di piedi tre oncie cinque veronesi. In questo quadro sta dipinto in tela alla parte destra [3831] un piccolo altare con parapetto rosso e tovaglia che pende da lati, sopra di cui vi è l'immagine di un crocifisso piccolo pendente dalla croce. Genuflesso con un sol ginocchio appresso l'altare vi è un fanciullo vestito all'antica, di color cenericcio, con giubbone lungo poco più che a mezza coscia, il quale è unito nella parte laterale che si vede con piccoli bottoni rotondi dello stesso colore, avendo le maniche discendenti dal corpo del giubbone da un circolo di cartozzi che circonda la sommità del braccio. Il collo è pur circondato da colare bianco fatto a cartozzi piccoli; ne piedi ha scarpe del medesimo colore cenericcio, legate con un nastrino dello stesso colore. Dietro al fanciullo vi è la immagine che rappresenta, come a me pare, la B. Angela Merici, e questa è genuflessa con tutte due le ginocchia, con il capo coperto da veli bianchi alla maniera delle monache, ed ha il vestimento tutto di color cenericcio, cioè tonaca, cinta, e sopra la tonica un mantello che dalle spalle pende sino a piedi, e sta in atto di supplichevole con le mani giunte, e fra il braccio sinistro tiene il bordone, dalle di cui sommità pende un panno lino bianco. Il capo di questa immagine ha raggi. Nel lato dell'antescritto altare che si vede di sotto alla tovaglia pendente vi sono parole dipinte a nero, con lettere maiuscole romane ben formate, eccettuata l'epoca che parmi indicare il tempo della pittura, la quale è scritta [383<sup>v</sup>] con numeri arabi che formano questa iscrizione: Per la ottenuta sanità del presente figliolo ad intercesione de la B. Angela da Desenzano, etatis suue ano X - 1601.

Il quadro che pende dalla parete della sacristia, in faccia al suddetto uscio, ha

cornice di pero nera, alto oncie diecisette e mezza, largo oncie venticinque, ed è dipinto in tela e rappresenta in alto nelle nubi S. Orsola avanti della quale, genuflessa pure sopra le nubi, vi è l'immagine che rappresenta, come a me sembra, la B. Angela vestita con tonica nera e con velo bianco in capo. Abbasso vi è un ecclesiastico genuflesso sopra il terreno in atto di preghiera, vestito di veste lunga nera con colare e manizzini da prete, con capelli tagliati alla maniera degl'ecclesiastici, avendo mostachi, e nel mento poca barba. Nel lembo di questo quadro sono scritte con carattere maiuscolo romano queste parole: Quas referam meritas tanto pro munere grates; reddere dona nihil corda vovere satis.

Nel cuoio dorato che fu indicato parte di un parapetto, si vede formato un contorno fatto all'antica alla maniera quasi gottica, architettata con due colonne laterali dipinte, sopra delle quali si erge una volta con ornato quasi gottico. In mezzo a questo contorno sta dipinta la immagine che rappresenta, come io credo, la B. Angela Merici vestita tutta di color cenericcio, cioè tonaca, cinta, mantello pendente dalle [384<sup>r</sup>] spalle sino a piedi, coperto il capo di velo nero con sottogole di velo bianco. La figura è genuflessa con le mani giunte e con il bordone tra il braccio sinistro. Il capo è circondato di laureola. Essa sta orando avanti un picciolo altare con parapetto rosso, coperto di tovaglia pendente dai lati sopra di cui vi è un crocefisso pendente dalla croce. Il fondo interno del contorno è messo a oro. L'altezza del cuoio è oncie venti una e mezza, e la larghezza oncie diecisette.

## b) Nella chiesa parrocchiale

Nella nave di mezzo di questa chiesa, fatta a tre navi, vi è un corniccione che gira all'intorno di tutta la nave medesima ed anche di tutto il coro, sopra l'architrave del quale vi è un fregio tra il medesimo architrave e cornice di ordine dorico, corrispondente all'ordine tutto della chiesa; il qual fregio ha i suoi triglifi, e nell'interstizi di questi, alla maniera antica, vi sono mettope nelle quali vedonsi formate con bassi rilievi figure rappresentanti cose sacre ed ecclesiastiche. Si vedono e candelabri e immagini di serafini con quattro ed anco sei ale, figure che rappresentano instromenti della passione di Cristo, ed altre simili. Fra queste figure sacre, le quali tutte sono fatte di basso rilievo e di stucco o gesso, ve ne sono dalla parte dell'Epistola sei, che rappresentano figure de Santi. La prima figura verso l'altar maggiore nella seconda mettopa è formata e rappresenta un vescovo con pluviale, mitra e bastone, con barba lunga; è scarno di faccia, con le mani giunte in modo di supplicante. Qual santo sia espresso in questa figura io non so dirlo. Nella terza mettopa vi è una figura di basso rilievo che rappresenta un'eremita o sia un pellegrino che ha bordone, rocchetto e barba al mento; ed ho sentito dire che possa rappresentare S. Benigno, il quale è protettore – assieme [397<sup>v</sup>] con S. Vicenzo vescovo e martire, e S. Anastasio - di questa Communità; onde può essere che quel Vescovo, che io non ho saputo distinguere, possa rappresentare S. Vicenzo. Nell'undecima metopa vi è la figura vestita di tonaca lunga con mozzetta e palma in una mano ed un libro nell'altra, con barba al mento, la quale forse rappresenterà S. Anastasio. Nella duodecima metopa vi è una figura di basso rilievo a stucco o gesso, che rappresenta una donna velata al modo che sono velate le monache, con rocchetto e bordone da pellegrino avanti di un crocefisso in modo supplicante con le mani giunte, la quale pare che non possi rappresentare altri che la immagine della B. Angela Merici, come io ho osservato nelle descrizioni da me fatte delle altre sue immagini che sin'ora sono state osservate. Nella decima sesta vi è la figura, o immagine, di S. Maria Maddalena penitente, titolare di questa chiesa, la quale si riconosce per i capelli sparsi a lungo della vita e per il vaso di balsamo che tiene nella mano destra. Nella metopa vigesima vi è la immagine di S. Carlo, la quale facilmente si riconosce dal suo vestito episcopale con rocchetto e mozzetta, e dalla faccia e dal profilo in cui si trova, che lo rende simile alle note sue immagini; ed è egli situato avanti la croce. Tutte queste immagini non sono intere, ma si vedono formate a mezzo la loro figura, perché le mettope sono solamente alte oncie ventidue, e larghe oncie dieci [398<sup>r</sup>] nove veronesi; onde le immagini comprese in queste mettope sono proporzionate al sito delle medesime.

#### c) In località Machetto

Quest'oratorio campestre è lungo internamente piedi diecisette; largo pure internamente piedi undeci oncie due; alto piedi dodeci oncie dieci, misurato dal pavi-

mento alla sommità del volto. Tutti questi piedi sono di misura veronese.

La sua struttura è bislunga, come dalli piedi della lunghezza e larghezza da me accennati ancor si riconosce. Non è fatto con alcun ordine architettonico ed ha un volto un poco sfiancato e non ha tutto sesto. La porta per cui dalla strada pubblica si entra è alta piedi sette, larga piedi quattro e oncie due, e la portella per cui si entra in sacristia è alta piedi cinque e larga due e mezzo. Dalla sacristia vi è una fenestrella, che ha prospetto nell'oratorio; è alta oncie ventidue e larga oncie ventisette. Sopra di questa fenestrella vi è altra fenestra, che porge lume sopra la mensa dell'altare con ferrata e vetri, la quale in quadrato alta e larga è piedi due e mezzo, e dirimpetto alla medesima ci è altra fenestra, che dà lume, del tutto simile alla sudetta. Anche sopra la porta, per cui si entra dalla strada, vi è una fenestra fatta a mezza [401<sup>v</sup>] luna, alta oncie venti circa nel mezzo e larga quanto è la luce della porta stessa. Il pavimento è salicato di quadrelli. Il volto è dipinto a fresco, con fascie, cornici e grotteschi, e nel mezzo è dipinta la colomba che rappresenta lo Spirito Santo.

Questo oratorio è situato con l'altare all'oriente, e la porta per cui si entra è a occidente. Vi è in esso un solo altare, con un solo grado, il di cui contorno è di pietra dura, e la pradella è formata con quadroncelli di terra cotta. Il parapetto di questo altare ha cornice con fogliami d'intaglio dorati, la quale contorna il pallio di lana a righe di diversi colori. La mensa è unita al muro, e le parti superiori alla stessa mensa, cioè gradi per candellieri et ancona, sono nicchiate entro un vano, che s'interna nel muro oncie diciotto, e l'altezza di questo vano nel mezzo dell'arco del medesi-

mo è di piedi sette oncie quattro; e la larghezza è di piedi sette.

Intorno a questo vano, come pure nel suo interiore, vi è pittura a fresco, fatta a cornici e arabeschi. I gradi de' candellieri sono due, di legno, lavorati a fogliami dorati, e nel fondo sono coloriti di verde. Sopra di questi vi è un reliquiario grande di legno, d'intaglio dorato, nella di cui sommità vi sono angioletti pure dorati. Una piccola croce è fissa sopra di questo reliquiario e nella parte più eminente vi è la figura di Gesù Cristo risuscitato. Quattro sono i candellieri di legno argentato sopra i sudetti gradi, con palme in vasi pure di legno [402] argentati che adornano l'altare. Immediatamente sopra i gradi predetti, e attaccato al muro del sudetto vano, vi è un quadro appeso che serve per ancona di questo altare, con cornice di legno d'intaglio a fiori dorata, di larghezza per ogni verso di circa oncie tre. Questo quadro è alto piedi cinque e mezzo e largo piedi tre e mezzo. In esso è dipinta in alto nelle

nubi Maria Vergine col Bambino Gesù sedente, la quale ha in capo una corona imperiale, circondato poi da stelle e da splendori, e due angioletti di sopra portano una corona di rose. Sotto i piedi ha la mezza luna; nella mano destra ha l'abito del Carmine e nella sinistra il Rosario. Lateralmente vi è, dalla parte dell'Evangelio, la immagine di S. Francesco Xaverio, il quale con la mano destra accenna il nome di

Gesù, che è sopra alla stessa mano, fra splendori.

Questa figura sta in piedi sopra il terreno ivi figurato; essa è vestita di cotta e stola. All'altro lato, ed alla parte dell'Epistola, sta una figura pure diritta in piedi, come quella di S. Francesco Xaverio, la quale è vestita di nero, ha velo che dal capo pende sopra le spalle, sotto del quale il pittore ne formò un altro trasparente, che dalla sommità pure del capo discende sopra la faccia sino al naso, in modo però che si ravvisa chiaramente i lineamenti del volto. Un altro velo non tanto trasparente è dipinto sopra le spalle e il petto. Nella mano destra tiene un libro aperto, sopra di cui, [402<sup>v</sup>] ne fogli apparenti aperti, sta scritto con lettere maiuscole *Beata Angela Pelegri*na. Nella mano sinistra tiene il bordone, nella cui sommità sta attaccata una zucchetta.

Dalle parole qui descritte, e dalla maniera del vestire di questa sacra immagine, che rappresenta una Vergine vestita alla maniera delle Orsoline e rappresenta una pellegrina, non si può errare giudicando che rappresenti essa la B. Angela Merici, fondatrice della Congregazione di S. Orsola, e che questo oratorio sia stato eretto sotto il titolo della medesima, come così viene ancora chiamato. Due altre figure nella prima linea del piano stanno ginocchioni, una a parte dell'Evangelio con due ginocchia, vestita di camice e dalmatica rossa, con manipolo, tenente in mano un libro aperto, che rappresenta S. Lorenzo, avendo ai piedi e palma e graticola. L'altrafigura alla parte dell'Epistola sta genuflessa col solo ginocchio sinistro, ed esprime l'immagine di S. Antonio di Padova, avendo a piedi e giglio e libro, e stando con le mani incrocciate sul petto ed è vestito coll'abito de' Minori Conventuali.

Sopra l'arco esteriore del vano si legge questa iscrizione, fatta con carattere romano: Religionis votum fideique vexilum a Cristophoro Villio comite B.V. Mariae, Divo Francisco Xaverio et Venerabili Angelae, ob obtentam gratiam dicatum et ecclesia haec aedificata fuit anno MDCLXXXIV. Sotto di questa iscrizione vi è un picciolo stemma dipinto nella chiave dell'arco suddetto, [403<sup>r</sup>] che dicesi essere l'arma di Casa Villio.

## 2. VERONA. Descrizione del notaio Giuseppe Bovio

## Nella chiesa della Compagnia di S. Orsola

Il quadro pendente alla parete della chiesa laterale alla parte dell'Evangelio vicino alla porta della strada è dipinto su la tela, ed ha cornice nera con filetto dorato; è alto di luce piedi tre, largo piedi due oncie nove veronesi. Rappresenta una figura genuflessa con mani giunte, con veli in capo circondato da raggi e da splendori, alla maniera delle monache, vestita con tonaca bigia, cinta di corda, e mantello simile come sono vestite le Terziarie francescane di questa città; sopra di essa immagine vi è dipinta la gloria con angeli che suonano di diversi istromenti; verso la qual gloria per una scala ascendono angeli e vergini, dopo le quali pure altri angeli ascendono. Dietro alla immagine genuflessa che ho descritta, vi sono alcune vergini in piedi, in atto di parlar tra di loro. L'altro quadro in faccia al sopradescritto pendente alla parte dell'Epistola, dipinto pure in tela, con cornice simile al primo, senza filetto dora-

to, della medesima altezza e larghezza, rappresenta una vergine stesa a terra, con la vita però un poco inalzata, [417] avendo la mano sinistra al petto in atto di umiliazione, e la destra appoggiata sul pavimento in atto di sostener la vita. Ha veli in capo, il quale è parimente circondato da raggi ed ha tonaca cinta di corda, con mantello di color oscuro simile a quello de' Minori Osservanti. Un angelo con la mano sinistra le tiene il velo sotto il mento, e con la destra sembra di scaricare un colpo di

disciplina.

Dietro alla vergine descritta vi è una tavola, sopra di cui è dipinto un candelliero con candela accessa ed un teschio di morte. Si vede finalmente la immagine di Gesù Cristo redentore con splendori e raggi, in forma che parla alla vergine stesa in terra e con la mano destra le fa cenno in modo che resti ammonita di qualche cosa, con la sinistra sostenendo le sacre sue vestimenta. Nell'atrio vicino alla porta a mano destra è dipinta a fresco una pittura, la di cui altezza di luce è piedi quattro oncie otto, e la larghezza piedi tre oncie sette veronesi, e forma una medaglia contorniata con ornato pure dipinto a fresco. Rappresenta questa pittura a parte destra Maria Vergine che tiene in grembo Gesù Cristo morto, avanti la quale immagine è dipinta una vergine vestita alla maniera delle terziarie francescane di color bigio, con veli all'uso delle monache in capo, circondato, questo, da raggi; tiene la mano destra sopra il petto in atto di adorazione, e nella mano sinistra ha il bordone. Le stanno dipinte all'intorno [417<sup>v</sup>] altre vergini vestite nella medesima maniera come sono vestite queste Orsoline. L'ultimo quadro che pende nel confessionale esteriore ha cornice dorata alli angoli, della quale sono fogliami pure dorati. L'altezza di questo è di piedi due oncie due di luce, e la larghezza è di piedi uno oncie otto. Questo rappresenta in gloria a mano destra S. Orsola sedente, che ha palma in mano ed un angioletto che porta lo stendardo con croce rossa; a sinistra pure in gloria vi è una vergine genuflessa, vestita con tonaca bigia e mantello del medesimo colore e veli in capo allo stesso modo come sono queste terziarie francescane, ed ha appresso di sé un libro. Sotto alla gloria sudetta stanno due vergini orsoline genuflesse sopra il terreno, la prima a mano destra, con corona nelle mani, l'altra a mano sinistra con libro aperto. Le immagini da me descritte rappresentanti una vergine terziaria di S. Francesco, con segni di pellegrinaggio, con allusioni alle visioni ch'ebbe la B. Angela Merici della scala per cui ascendono li angeli e le vergini al cielo, della correzione fattale dall'angelo e riposta in gloria con S. Orsola danno indizio che da loro venga rappresentata la medesima B. Angela come così da queste Vergini di S. Orsola viene tenuta.

# 36. Iconografia mericiana a Brescia

Città del Vaticano, Archivio Segreto Vaticano, S.C. Rituum, *Processus* 340, ff. 689r-694r; f. 698r; ff. 700v-701v. Inedito.

## a) Nella chiesa di S. Orsola

Descrizione del notaio Angelo Facconi

Questa chiesa, la quale è fabbricata con elegante disegno d'architettura corintia, ha le muraglie laterali della sua navata divise e scompartite ciascuna da lesene in

cinque spazi, o siano intercolonni di disuguale grandezza.

Nel maggiore di essi, che sta nel mezzo, ed è aperto con un arco, vi è costrutta una cappella. [689] Gli altri quattro sono chiusi, e, di questi, i due più ristretti sono contigui alla cappella; gli altri due più larghi sono situati verso gli angoli della chiesa. Ciascuno dei sudetti quattro intercolonni chiusi è occupato da due quadri, collocati l'uno al di sopra dell'altro, i quali formano il numero di sedici, cioè otto da una parte della chiesa e otto dall'altra. Sei altri ve ne sono appesi alla parete laterale del presbiterio, o sia cappella maggiore, dalla parte dell'Evangelio, cioè tre similmente in alto e tre abbasso, coi quali si compie il numero di ventidue. Gli otto quadri collocati nel sito più basso, nel vaso della chiesa, si rassomigliano fra di sé nella cornice, la qual è di legno intagliato e dorato, larga oncie 4 e due minuti. Sono eziandio eguali nell'altezza, che è di palmi 9 e oncie 1, non compresa la cornice, il che sempre si deve intendere; ma sono essi, poi, di larghezza disuguale, perché quei che sono negl'intercolonni angusti non eccedono in larghezza palmi 7 e un'oncia, laddove li situati nei larghi sono di larghezza palmi 9 e oncie 11 in circa. Alla stessa maniera, nell'ordine superiore l'altezza degli otto quadri distribuiti per la chiesa, e ancora dei sei che sono nel presbiterio, è in tutti eguale, cioè di palmi 7 oncie cinque e mezza. Eguale altresì, e perfettamente simile, è la cornice di legno, che consiste in una fascia piana, con un poco d'ornamento negli orli interno ed esterno, tinta a vernice di color d'oro, con un filetto d'oro nell'orlo interiore, larga oncie 4 e 4 minuti. Ma in larghezza essi [690<sup>r</sup>] sono disuguali, perché nei campi stretti essa è di palmi 6 e un'oncia, e nei larghi è di palmi otto oncie due in circa. Queste sono le pitture che servono d'ornamento alla chiesa, oltre un gran quadro, collocato sopra la porta maggiore, nel qual è rappresentato il martirio di S. Orsola e delle sue compagne, ed oltre le ancone dei tre altari, cioè del maggiore, eretto ad onore della predetta Santa Martire, e dei due minori, dedicati l'uno alla B.V. e l'altro a Santa Cattarina Martire.

<sup>1</sup>Incominciando dalla porta maggiore e venendo verso il presbiterio, dalla parte dell'Epistola, nel primo intercolonnio, che è uno de' larghi, il quadro più basso esprime il martirio di Santa Barbara. <sup>2</sup>Nel superiore sono dipinte due fanciulle di tenera età, in atto d'essere incamminate verso un luogo deserto e scosceso, il qual dalla prima viene accennato alla seconda, che la siegue. In lontananza si scorge una casetta, d'onde escono alcune persone verso il sito delle fanciulle. Non v'è iscrizione, ma si tiene che vi siano rappresentate la B. Angela e sua sorella, quando s'avviarono al deserto.

<sup>3</sup>Nel quadro di sotto, nell'intercolonnio seguente, sta effigiata S. Orsola in piedi, che ha corona reale in testa, veste maestosa di color vinato e manto gialdastro, e nelle mani tiene due stendardi di color bianco con croce rossa; ed uno di questi con la sinistra lo porge, e insieme coll'indice della destra lo accenna (come commandando che lo prenda) alla B. Angela, che, in età avanzata, le giace inginocchiata a piedi, e lo prende [690<sup>v</sup>] con la mano destra, tenendo la sinistra appoggiata al petto. Si conosce che è la B. Angela perché, oltre il rassomigliare nella faccia ad altri più antichi ritratti della medesima, è vestita da Terziaria di S. Francesco, con tonica di colore cenericcio oscuro e mantello dello stesso colore, con velo bianco in testa e col bordone appoggiato alla spalla sinistra. Alla detta S. Orsola fanno corteggio alcune Sante, similmente in piedi, cioè Santa Cecilia a destra, in atteggiamento di tasteggiar l'organo, ed a sinistra le due Sante Catterine, la Vergine domenicana, che tale si conosce all'abito ed ha un giglio nella sinistra, e la Martire, che posa una mano su

d'una ruota. Queste due, però, si vedono solamente in mezza figura, restando in parte coperte dalla B. Angela. Nell'alto del quadro v'è lo Spirito Santo in forma di

colomba, con raggi, splendori e gloria d'angeli intorno.

<sup>4</sup>Il quadro superiore contiene l'imagine della B. Vergine in piedi, con veste rossa e manto ceruleo, la qual presenta una fanciulla tutta ammantata di bianco alla B. Angela, ancor fanciulla, vestita di color azzurro, la quale, inginocchiata col destro ginocchio, la sta riguardando. Sopra la B.V. pende una gloria d'angeli. Si vedono posati sul terreno un cestello di vimini coperto d'un pannolino e un bottaccio da vino. Il rimanente della pittura è campagna. In fondo del quadro si legge la seguente iscrizione, fatta con tinta nera a caratteri maiuscoli romani, come sono anche tutte le iscrizioni degli [691<sup>r</sup>] altri quadri che descriverò: *Morta la Sorella, desiderosa Angela del suo Stato, Maria Vergine la consola col mostrargliela*.

<sup>5</sup>Trapassando la cappella dedicata alla B.V., ch'è situata nell'intercolonnio di mezzo, nel quadro inferiore dell'intercolonnio che siegue, si vede S. Carlo, vestito pontificalmente, in atto di dare la corona ad alcune Vergini Orsoline, coll'assistenza

de' Canonici ed altri ecclesiastici in abito corale.

<sup>6</sup>Nel superiore è figurato, in vicinanza d'un altare, un religioso francescano sedente in una sedia, con stola al collo, che presenta il cordone di S. Francesco alla B. Angela giovane, inginocchiata a suoi piedi, vestita da Terziaria francescana di color cenericcio, che lo riceve divotamente con la mano sinistra, applicando al petto la destra. Dietro di lei sono tre altre giovani inginocchiate, vestite da secolari. Dietro la cattedra del detto prelato regolare, stanno cinque religiosi francescani e due secolari, i quali però si vedono solamente in mezza figura. In fondo al quadro si leggono le seguenti parole: *Per haver causa di spesso communicarsi si fa Terziaria di S. Francesco*.

<sup>7</sup>Siegue il quinto intercolonnio, nel quale la pittura più bassa rappresenta il martirio di S. Agnese. <sup>8</sup>Nel quadro in alto si vede un sacerdote che celebra Messa, e alcune persone di vario stato che la ascoltano. Particolarmente vi si osserva la B. Angela in età giovanile, vestita coll'abito di Terziaria di S. Francesco, cioè con tonaca lunga e mantello più corto, stretto al collo, di color cenericcio, con velo bianco in testa ed altro [691<sup>v</sup>] pur bianco che le cuopre la gola, e con cordone a fianchi, elevata dirittamente con tutta la persona da terra, tenendo la faccia rivolta al cielo e le braccia alquanto allargate e distese all'ingiù. Nell'alto del quadro, presso la testa della Beata, è dipinta l'iscrizione seguente: *Mentre ascolta Messa, assonta in estasi si vede molto elevata da Terra*.

De' sei quadri, che sono appesi alla muraglia laterale del presbiterio dalla parte dell'Evangelio, <sup>9</sup>il primo, cioè il più prossimo all'altare nell'ordine basso, esprime la B. Angela vestita da Terziaria francescana, inginocchiata, con le mani applicate al petto e con la faccia alzata al cielo in atto di rimirare una scala che alla terra tende al cielo che sembra aperto. A pie' della scala stanno due angeli, che indirizzano a salire due donne, vestite da Orsoline, con corona di fiori in testa. Alla metà della scala si scorgono due altri angeli, che vengono incontro a due altre Orsoline vestite e coronate come le prime. Alla cima della scala v'è una gloria d'angeli, alcuni de quali sono in atto di suonare istromenti musicali, e in mezzo a celesti splendori appariscono le seguenti parole: *Tu, Angela, sarai Fondatrice d'una simil compagnia in Brescia*. Nel piano sono effigiate due donne secolari, sedute in terra, che discorrono insieme. Vi si vede campagna con fabbriche, e lago in lontananza, e in fondo del quadro vi è questa iscrizione: *Estatica vede per una Scala ascender Vergini con gli Angeli* [692'] et sente intonarsi Fondatrice della Compagnia.

<sup>10</sup>Il secondo ci dà a vedere la detta Beata nello stesso abito, di età alquanto provetta, accompagnata da due Orsoline, la quale, stando in piedi, è in atto di raggionare con un carmelitano, con un ecclesiastico e con un secolare, che similmente sono in piedi. Il luogo pare un portico, e nel piedestallo d'una colonna vi si legge: Non sapendo lettere, dichiara a dotti li sensi oscuri della Sacra Scrittura, per illustratione divina. <sup>11</sup>Nel terzo è rappresentata la Beata vestita da pellegrina, col sarrochino, ma cieca, lagrimante e con le mani giunte e incrocicchiate, ed in atto d'inginocchiarsi, o sia di abbandonarsi col corpo per il dolore, sostenuta però da una delle due pellegrine secolari che sono in sua compagnia. A sinistra della Beata vedesi un pellegrino in piedi, che, guardandola, mostra ammirazione e compassione. Appié del quadro, da una parte sono dipinti un teschio ed ossa di morti, e dall'altra le seguenti parole: Nel viaggio di Gierusalemme Dio la rende cieca et così visita quei Santi Luoghi con molte lagri-

<sup>12</sup>Nell'ordine poi superiore, il primo quadro, cioè il più vicino all'ancona dell'altare, ci mostra la B. Angela parimente in abito da pellegrina, inginocchiata avanti ad un crocefisso, con la mano sinistra stesa verso di esso, ma con la faccia rivolta all'indietro, cioè verso di un angelo, il quale è in atto di toccare a lei l'occhio destro con la sua destra. Giace inginocchiata alla destra dell'angelo un'altra [692] pellegrina, e nel fondo del quadro è dipinta la seguente iscrizione: Nel ritorno di Gierusalem-

me orando ad un Crocefisso, ricupera divinamente la vista.

<sup>13</sup>Nel secondo quadro superiore è figurata la Beata, vestita similmente da pellegrina, con tasca a fianchi e col bordone fra le braccia, appoggiato alla spalla sinistra, prostrata a mani giunte davanti al Sommo Pontefice sedente, che le dà la benedizio-

ne assistito da Cardinali. In questo quadro non si legge iscrizione veruna.

<sup>14</sup>Il terzo quadro superiore rappresenta Cristo sedente sopra le nuvole, con vari cherubini a piedi e la Beata inginocchioni, rivolta verso di lui in atto di supplicante; ed alle di lei spalle mirasi un angelo, il quale, preso avendo con la sinistra il di lei braccio destro, la percuote con un flagello. In un cartello dipinto in fondo del quadro si leggono le seguenti parole: Ritardando di fondare la Compagnia di S. Orsola, vien flagellata da un Angelo et ripresa da Christo.

15Dal presbitero ritornando nel vaso della chiesa, e incamminandosi verso la porta per osservare di mano in mano i quadri esposti nella muraglia laterale della chiesa, dalla detta parte dell'Evangelio, il primo quadro che s'incontra nell'ordine basso

tiene effigiata Santa Cattarina vergine e martire, legata alla ruota.

<sup>16</sup>Quello poi, che è nell'alto, rappresenta la Beata vestita del solito suo abito di Terziaria di S. Francesco, sedente nel mezzo di nove vergini, che parimente siedono, vestite di abiti secolari, [693<sup>r</sup>] ma modesti. Tanto ella, quanto sei delle sudette vergini, tengono ciascuna fra le mani un libro, alla qual pia adunanza ella sembra che faccia uno spirituale ragionamento. Sopra il capo della detta Beata mirasi lo Spirito Santo nella figura di colomba, circondato da raggi e da splendori. In un sedile vi è dipinta questa iscrizione: La B. Madre Angela apre la sua Regola et fonda la Compagnia nel giorno di S.ta Catterina MDXXXV.

<sup>17</sup>Dal quadro inferiore del prossimo intercolonnio vien espresso S. Carlo Borromeo, sedente in abito cardinalizio e corteggiato da alcuni ecclesiastici, al quale una Orsolina genuflessa (cui fanno accompagnamento due altre similmente genuflesse) presenta riverentemente un libro, sopra del quale sta scritto: Regola delle Vergini di

Santa Orsola.

<sup>18</sup>Quello che è al di sopra rappresenta la Beata inginocchiata, che presenta un li-

bro aperto ad un prelato, che siede in abito da Vescovo con rocchetto; il quale è assistito da due sacerdoti, ed ella è accompagnata da tre Orsoline che stanno in piedi. L'iscrizione è la seguente: Porge la Regola della Compagnia al Prelato et ottiene la sua

confermatione.

<sup>19</sup>Indi trovasi la cappella di Santa Cattarina Vergine e Martire, doppo la quale il quadro di sotto mostra la Beata Angela in abito di Terziaria, inginocchiata a pian terreno in una chiesa di forma piuttosto moderna, davanti un altare con parapetto rosso e tovaglie pendenti da lati, che ha per ancona l'immagine di S. Orsola [693<sup>v</sup>] con lo stendardo, su la predella del qual'altare giace appoggiato il bordone della Beata, dietro alla quale si vede un'altra Terziaria similmente inginocchiata.

<sup>20</sup>Nella pittura di sopra si osserva la Beata sedente sopra una stuoia, con un crocefisso in mano, circondata da alcune vergini sue discepole. V'è ancora il notaio che legge il testamento, come ci accertano le seguenti parole dipinte in fondo del detto quadro: *Ridotta al suo fine, fa legger il suo divoto Testamento e muore nel Signore.* 

<sup>21</sup>Finalmente, nell'intercolonnio vicino alla porta, il quadro inferiore rappresenta

Santa Lucia in atto d'essere communicata da S. Pietro.

<sup>22</sup>Nel superiore, poi, è figurato un decoroso deposito, alquanto da terra elevato, nella cui facciata comparisce ritratto il sacro corpo della B. Angela, e nel cimiero si legge il seguente epitaffio, rappresentato come scolpito in lastra di paragone: Angela Mericia, Angelicis ornata virtutibus, magnis cumulata meritis, Brixiae quievit in Domino, Anno MDXL, die XXVII Januarii. Una radiante stella, che sembra un picciol sole, pende nell'aria sopra il deposito medesimo; dinanzi al quale, ma sì però che non ne impediscon la veduta, stanno in piedi quattro persone, due a destra di esso in abito di Canonici Regolari e due a sinistra in abito secolare. In fondo al quadro è dipinta questa iscrizione: Morta, appare sopra il luogo uno splendore stellato, e chi dubita della sua santità sente per[694']cosse divine nel sepolcro con stupore. Niuna delle imagini fin qui descritte non ha raggi, né splendori.

# Perizia del pittore Francesco Savanni

Per quanto s'appartiene al tempo in cui sono stati dipinti i quadri che adornano questa chiesa, tralasciate le pitture degli altari ed il gran quadro sopra la porta maggiore, dico e giudico che sono stati dipinti dal 1650 al 1700 in circa, perché mi pare di conoscer di che mano sono, e so che gli autori erano coetanei, e vivevano e fiorivano nel tempo suddetto; ed ho pratica del loro dipingere, perché qui in Brescia, mia patria, vi sono molte opere di essi, ed ho avuto comodo di vederle ed osservarle. Il pittore che ha dipinto il maggior numero dei detti quadri, e che anche è stato il più valente, fu Pompeo Ghitti, di cui sono li quattro quadri che rappresentano le Sante Martiri Barbara, Agnese, Catterina e Lucia, che si conoscono dall'istoria de i loro martiri; ed ancora sono suoi i sei quadri che si vedono appesi nella cappella maggiore; ed egli morì l'anno 1704.

[I 22 dipinti sono così attribuiti dal pittore Savanni: a «Carlo Bacchiocco, pittor milanese» quelli che noi abbiamo numerato: 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 17, 19. A Pompeo Ghitti i numeri: 1, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 21. A Carl'Antonio Gandini i numeri: 18, 20, 22. Per la perizia del quadro n. 16, vedi parte II, cap. VII, 3.b.]

## Descrizione del notaio Angelo Facconi

I due quadri, uno maggior dell'altro, che sono stati per il passato, e stanno tutto-

ra esposti in quest'oratorio, rappresentano entrambi la B. Angela.

Il primo è alto palmi 4 e oncie 2, e largo palmi 3 oncie 4 2/4, compresa la cornice, la qual è di legno tinto di nero, col filetto interiore dorato, ed è larga oncie 3 in circa. Vi si vede nel mezzo la Beata sedente, vestita del suo solito abito di Terziaria di S. Francesco, col petto però coperto d'un velo bianco che termina in punta presso al cingolo; la quale nella sinistra, appoggiata sul ginocchio, tiene un libro aperto ed alza la destra in atteggiamento di accennare [701'] il Santissimo Nome di Gesù, che in cifra è dipinto in alto al di lei destro lato, dentro un circolo di luminosi raggi, verso del quale sono indirizzate le seguenti parole, come se uscite dalla di lei bocca: Hic est amor meus, le quali dipinte sono con carattere maiuscoletto. Fanno a lei corona sei giovani, tre per parte, similmente sedenti, tutte in abito secolare modestissimo, quale però di color nero e quale di bigio oscuro. Ma la cuffia della testa e il velo da petto sono in tutte uniformi, cioè di tela bianca, e della forma che usano ancora presentemente le Orsoline di questa città. Ha ciascuna delle dette giovani il suo libro in mano, e sembra che odano con attenzione gl'insegnamenti della loro comune Beata Madre.

Nell'alto del quadro due angeli, vestiti a lungo e sospesi in aria, sostengono una gran corona di fiori. La struttura del luogo è in forma di tribuna, cioè di edifizio arcuato a maniera di semicircolo. Nel fondo del quadro è dipinta una cartella con queste parole della grandezza di tre quarti d'oncia: La B. Agela Brisciana Vergine, Fondatrice della nova cogregatioe de Vergine, detta la Copagnia di S. Orsola, e in un sedile

è notato con tinta nera l'anno 1540, fatto con numeri arabici.

Il secondo quadro è alto palmi 2 oncie 3 in circa, e largo palmi 2, compresa la cornice, fattagli modernamente di legno di color naturale, cioè bianco, che è larga oncie due e due terzi. Questo è un ritratto al naturale in mezza figura della B. Angela, cavato, per quanto pare, dal di lei corpo morto. Ha velo in capo, stringirolo e sottogola di [701<sup>v</sup>] color bianco, la tonaca e mantello sono di color cenericcio oscuro. Non si vedono le mani, perché coperte dal mantello medesimo. Nel rovescio vi è scritta su la tela, con tinta nera e lettere maiuscolette, questa iscrizione: Effigies B. Angelae de Mericis, Brix., Fund. Societatis S. Ursulae. Obiit Anno 1540, 27 janu.i.

[Su questi quadri, vedi parte II, cap. VII, 3.b.].

# 37. Sommario addizionale

Parigi, Bibliothèque Nationale, H.669

Brixien. Beatificationis et Canonizationis Ven. Servae Dei Angelae Mericiae Institutricis Societatis S. Ursulae Beatae nuncupatae. Summarium Additionale super Dubio: An sit signanda Commissio introductionis Caussae in casu, et ad effectum, de quo agitur?

Brixien. Beatificationis et Canonizationis Servae Dei Angelae Mericiae Fundatricis Societatis S. Ursulae Beatae nuncupatae.

Num. 1. Decretum editum 12 Septembris 1761 super revisione Scriptorum B. Angelae attributorum.

Ad satisfaciendum praeliminari exceptioni propositae in Animadversionibus R.P.D. Fidei Promotoris, et super Dubio signaturae Commissionis introductivae exaratis in Causa Servae Dei Angelae Merici Beatae nuncupatae, peractae sunt per reverendissimum Episcopum brixien., illiusve Vicarium generalem Judices Delegatos in vim litterarum particularium a Sac. Rituum Congregatione relaxatarum opportunae diligentiae in Civitate, et Dioecesi Brixien. pro reperiendis nedum omnibus et singulis Scriptis, dictae Servae Dei attributis, et in specie enumeratis in praefatis Animadversionibus, verum etiam aliis quibuscumque, quae reperibilia forte erant futura. Et reapse vigore istiusmodi diligentiarum reperta sunt, atque ad Sa-

cram Congregationem transmissa sequentia Manuscripta:

1. Libellus, notatum exhibens in externi operimenti fronte titulum hunc: Regola della Compagnia di S. Orsola. Primis autem foliis libellus iste minutus cum sit, incipit ab his Prologi verbis: Ogni cosa ragionevole. Porro integer dictus Prologus licet semel appositus, postea tamen deletus apparet extensis lineis oblongis a capite ad calcem usque cuiusvis paginae; subsequuntur autem breve encomium de statu virginali, et Indiculus capitum totius operis, quibus adjungitur alter Prologus a fol. 1 ad 4, sed pariter ut primus deletus. Regulae tandem initialia verba sub fol. 5 haec sunt: Del modo di ricever Cap. 1, finalia vero sub fol. 26 a ter.: Et chiarissima verginal corona, postque sequitur immediate adprobatio eiusdem Regulae, atque licentia Ordinarii Brixien. concessa sororibus Societatis Sanctae Ursulae super usu Sacramentorum, necnon Statutum conditum a Matre generali, binisque Apostolicis Conservatoribus dictae Societatis circa cingulum coriacium deferendum a quacumque Sorore supra proprias vestes.

2. Libellus alter foliorum 33 numeratorum, cui praefixus est titulus: Epistola confortatoria alle Vergini della Compagnia di S. Orsola composta per il suo Cancellier Gabriello Cozzano. Exorditur autem ab his verbis: Aldito io ò o sagre Sorelle, desinitque

hisce aliis verbis: Et né li sarà data.

3. Alius Libellus foliorum undecim non numeratorum, qui inscriptus est ab extra ut sequitur: Arricordi, che vanno alli Colonelli. Initialia operis verba haec sunt: Suor Angela indegna Serva de Jesu Christo; finalia vero haec alia: In nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti. Amen.

4. Similis Libellus foliorum tresdecim inscriptus ab extra: Testamento della Madre Suor Angela lassato alle Matrone, qui incipit interius: Jesus Maria IHS. Suor Angela Serva indegna di Gesù Christo, et finit: In nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti. Amen etc.

5. Consimilis Libellus foliorum 21 numerat. ad calcem, cuius externus titulus est: Dichia[ra]zione della Bolla del PP. Paolo III fatta da Gabriele Cozzano. Exordium autem accipit opus ab iis verbis: Gabriele Cozzano per voluntà di Iddio, et finem ab hisce aliis: Fuor della Città, o Diocese sua pigliare, o dare se possa.

His autem Manuscriptis per eminentissimum et reverendissimum dominum cardinalem Feroni Caussae Ponentem, adhibita Theologi Revisoris opera iuxta facultates ipsi a Sac. Congregatione praevio attributas mature, ac diligenter revisis, atque examinatis, facta demum fuit per eumdem plena relatio tam censurarum editarum a praedicto Theologo Revisore, quam contentorum in Processiculo Diligentiarum pro illorum perquisitione constructo in Congregatione ordinaria Sacrorum Rituum infrascripta die habita, et eminentissimi Patres dictae Sacrae Congregationi praepositi, R.P.D. Cajetano Forti Fidei Promotore voce prius audito, rescribendum censuerunt: Procedi posse ad ulteriora, reservato jure Promotori Fidei in suo congruo judicio etc. si SS.mo D. Nostro placuerit. Die 12 Septembris 1761.

Factaque deinde per per [!] me Secretarium de praedictis eidem SS.mo D. Nostro relatione, Sanctitas Sua benigne annuit. Die 16 eiusdem mensis, et anni 1761.

Ita reperitur in Regestis Decretorum Congregationis Sacrum Rituum. In fidem etc.

S. Burghesius S.R.C. Secretarius.

Loco + sigilli.

Num. 2. Decretum Sanctissimi D. Nostri Clementis PP. XIII, benigne annuentis, ut praesens caussa discutiatur in Sac. Rituum Congregatione Ordinaria absque interventu Consultorum.

Brixien. Beatificationis et Canonizationis Servae Dei Angelae Mericiae Fundatri-

cis Societatis Sanctae Ursulae Beatae nuncupatae.

Ex parte Postulatoris Caussae Servae Dei Angelae Mericiae Beatae nuncupatae pro dispensatione disentiendi in Congregatione ordinaria Sac. Rituum absque interventu Consultorum Dubium Signaturae Commissionis introductionis Caussae eiusdem Servae Dei Sanctissimo D. Nostro Clementi PP. XIII supplicatum fuit, et Sanctitas sua ad relationem mei Secretarii, quibuscumque Decretis in contrarium disponentibus minime obstantibus. Oratoris instantiae benigne annuit. Die 29 Novembris 1760.

D.F. card. Tamburinus Praefectus.

Loco + sigilli.

I.M. de Lerma Sac. Rituum Congregat. Secretarius.

«Num. 3. Elencus epistolarum Regum, Principum, et Magnatum petentium B. angelae Mericiae Caussam introduci, et celeriter expediris.

I. S. Caesareae et Apostolicae Maiestatis Mariae Theresiae, Romanorum Imperatricis ac Reginae Unghariae et Bohemiae, sub datum 12 Octobris 1758.

II. Sac. Maiestatis Regis Christianissimi sub datum 5 Ianuarii 1760.

III. Sac. Maiestatis Regis utriusque Siciliae.

IV. Celsitudinis Serenissimae Archiepiscopi, et Electoris Colonien. sub datum 12 Septembris 1756.

V. Celsitudinis Serenissimae Bavarien. Electoris sub datum 29 Maii 1756.

VI. Celstitudinis Serenissimae Treviren. Electoris Treviren. sub datum 30 Augusti 1756.

VII. Eminentissimi et reverendissimi domini cardinalis de Geoures.

VIII. Eminentissimi et reverendissimi domini cardinalis Puteobonelli Archiepiscopi Mediolanen. sub datum 22 Martii 1758.

IX. Celsissimi et eminentissimi D. cardinalis a Bavaria Episcopi Frisingen. sub datum 1 Martii 1758.

X. Reverendissimi Archiepiscopi Theodosiae ac Vicarii Basilicae Vaticanae sub datum 22 Maii 1759.

XI. Reverendissimi Archiepiscopi Bisuntini sub datum 6 Ianuarii 1758.

XII. Reverendissimi Episcopi Breslavien. sub datum 18 Aprilis 1757.

XIII. Reverendissimi Episcopi Brixien. sub datum 21 Octobris 1758 in Proc. fol. 3. ter.

II. Eiusdem Reverendissimi Episcopi Brixien. sub datum 21 Octobris 1758.

XIV. Reverendissimi Episcopi Miletopolitani Coadiutoris Tridentini sub datum 8 Iunii 1757.

XV. Reverendissimi Episcopi Lugdunen. sub datum 4 Maii 1757. XVI. Reverendissimi Episcopi Sistaricen. sub datum 1 Julii 1757.

XVII. Reverendissimi Episcopi Sistancen: sub datum 1 Julii 1757. XVII. Reverendissimi Episcopi Langerini sub datum 30 Martii 1758.

II. Eiusdem Reverendissimi Episcopi Langerini sub datum 30 Octobris 1758. XVIII. Reverendissimi Episcopi Andegaven. sub datum 17 Septembris 1757.

XIX. Reverendissimi Episcopi Eustecten. sub datum 5 Maii 1758.

XX. Reverendissimi Episcopi Nanneten. sub datum 20 Aprilis 1757.

XXI. Reverendissimi Episcopi Tutellen. sub datum 5 Septembris 1757.

XXII. Reverendissimi Episcopi Feltrien. sub datum 13 Aprilis 1758.

XXIII. Reverendissimi Episcopi Brixinen. sub datum 12 Martii 1757. XXIV. Reverendissimi Episcopi Narnien. sub datum 17 Maii 1757.

XXV. Reverendissimi Episcopi Scardonen. sub datum 29 Iulii 1758.

XXVI. Reverendissimi Episcopi Cremen. sub datum 29 Martii 1758.

XXVII. Reverendissimi Episcopi Veronen. sub datum 24 Augusti 1758.

II. Eiusdem Reverendissimi Episcopi Veronen. sub datum 18 Novembris 1759. XXVIII. Reverendissimi Capituli Cathedralis Ecclesiae Brixien. sub datum 25 Augusti 1758.

XXIX. Reverendissimi P. Magistri Generalis Ordinis Praedicatorum sub datum 21

Decembris 1759.

XXX. Reverendissimi P. Praepositi Generalis Soc. Iesu sub datum 10 Augusti 1759. XXXI. Reverendissimi P. Prioris Generalis Ordinis Eremitarum S. Augustini sub datum 12 Martii 1759.

II. Eiusdem Reverendissimi P. Prioris Generalis sub datum 18 Aprilis 1759.

XXXII. Reverendissimi P. Procuratoris Generalis tertii Ordinis S. Francisci sub datum 25 Martii 1759.

XXXIII. Reverendissimi P. Procuratoris Generalis Ordinis Carmelitarum sub datum 1 Decembris 1758.

XXXIV. Reverendissimi P. Ministri Generalis Ordinis Minorum de Observantia Sancti Francisci sub datum 20 Januarii 1759.

II. Eiusdem Reverendissimi P. Ministri Generalis sub datum 13 Februarii 1759. XXXV. Reverendissimi P. Procuratoris Generalis Canonicorum Regularium Lateranen. sub datum 7 Februarii 1759.

XXXVI. Admodum RR. PP. Ministri Provincialis, et Definitorum Provinciae Brixien. Ordinis Capuccinorum sub datum 12 Octobris 1758.

XXXVII. Illustrissimae Moderatricis Generalis Societatis S. Ursulae Brixiae sub datum 29 Martii 1750.

XXXVIII. Admodum Rev. P. Ministri Provincialis Ordinis Minorum de Observantia S. Francisci Provinciae Brixien. sub datum 2 Augusti 1758.

XXXIX. Reverendissimi P. Prioris Generalis Ordinis Minorum de Observantia Reformatorum S. Francisci sub datum 4 Februarii 1759.

XL. Cleri Oppidi Decentiani sub datum 30 Septembris 1758.

XLI. Archipresbyteri, et Capitularium Ecclesiae Parochialis Salodien. sub datum 30

Augusti 1758.

XLII. Illustrissimorum Deputatorum Civitatis Brixien. sub datum 8 Octobris 1758. XLIII. Illustrissimorum Sindici, et Deputatorum Oppidi Salodien. sub datum 16 Iunii 1760.

«Num. 4. Historici, aliaque auctorabilissima monumenta, titulo Sanctae V. Servam Dei cohonestantia» <sup>1</sup>.

1. Exemplar Constitutionum ab Ursulinis Monasterii Divionen. exhibitum Sac. Congregationi Episcoporum et Regularium, pro obtinenda adprobatione proprii Instituti relatum discussumque die 19 martii 1619, ut in Fasciculo supplicationum existente in Secretaria eiusdem Sacrae Congregationis.

2. Liber inscriptus: *S. Ursula vindicata* Auctore P. Hermanno Crombach typis cuso Coloniae Agrippinae 1647, tom. 2, lib. 6, cap. 18, pag. 437, et rursus in Indice verb.

Angela, Epitaphium, Foeminas, Sodalitas.

3. Epistola dedicatoria paemissa operi P. Thomae de Blanc Gallico idiomate, Im-

presso Divione 1661 sub titulo: Miroir des Vierges.

4. Liber inscriptus gallico sermone: *S. Ursule triomphante* auctore P. Thoma a S. Aloysio Carmelita, impressus Lutetiae Parisiorum 1666, pag. 288, 293, 294, 298, 299 et 303.

5. Chronicae Ursulinarum Tolosae impressae 1682, part. I, pagina 20.

6. Regulae et Constitutiones Ursulinarum impressae Clangerphurti, 1690, pag. 45.7. Opus gallico idiomate inscriptum: Del *Journal des illustres Religieuses de S. Ordre de* 

S. Ursule impresso Fori Sebusianorum 1690, tom. 4, pag. 496.

 Regulae et Constitutiones Ursulinarum, impressae Augustae Vindelicorum 1715, pag. 47.

9. Historia gallica lingua inscripta: Historie des Ordres Religieuses auctore P. Heliot

impressa Parisiis 1715, et ibidem reimpressa 1721, pag. 182, tom. 4.

10. Liber, cui titulus: *Tesoro della Dottrina Christiana* Auctore Reverendissimo Turlot, Praeposito et Vicario generali Namurcen. in italicum rursus idioma, et quinto reimpressus Venetiis 1726, tom. 1, part. 1, cap. 2, lect. 7, pag. 61.

11. Opus, cui titulus: Storia degl'Ordini ex gallica lingua in italicam versum opera,

et studio P. Fontana, et impressum Lucae 1738, tom. 4, pag. 195.

## «A. Historici, et alia monumenta, titulum Beatae Christi Famulae attribuentia».

1. Historia vitae Ancillae Christi impressa Brixiae 1600 auctoris Anonymi.

2. Alia similis historia impressa in Civitate Brixien. 1619, et impressa ibidem 1620 et 1683 [leggasi 1638] auctore Rev. P. Octavio Gondio Soc. Jesu.

Scriptor Vitae Famulae Dei impressae Bononiae 1672, pag. 45.
 Historia Vitae Ven. S.D. impressa Leodii 1626 idiomate gallico.

5. Historiae de Vitis SS.et BB. tertii Ordinis S. Francisci impressae Bergomi 1627, lib. 2, pag. 484 et seq.

6. Historia S. Ursulae P. Odi de Gissey gallico idiomate impressa Parisiis 1634.

7. Liber inscriptus *S. Ursula Vindicata* auctore P. Ermanno Combracch impresso Coloniae Agrippinae 1647, pag. 481 et seq.

8. Historia Vitae Ven. Servae Dei impressa Parisiis 1648 auctore Johanne Ugone.

Riproduciamo questa sezione bibliografica senza rilevare ogni volta gli errori di scrittura.

9. Liber gallico idiomate inscriptus: *La Glorie de S. Ursule* impresso Valentianae 1656 in quo lib. 1, part. 2, pag. 97 ad 164 hostoriam vitae V. Christi Servae Auctor concinnavit.

10. Vita V.S.D. elucubrata a Stephano Laploncio Richetta apud P. Thomam le Blanc in Libro inscripto: *Miroir des Vierges* Parisiis impresso 1661.

Diane in Libro inscripto. Wiroir des vierges Parisis impresso 1001.

11. Chronicae Ursulinarum Tolosae Auctore P. Parayrè Ordinis S. Augustini im-

pressae in eadem Civitate 1682.

12. Liber inscriptus: Journal des illustres Religeuses de l'Ordre de S. Ursule impresso Fori Sebastianorum 1684, tom. 1, pag. 358 et seq. ubi inserta est Vita V.S.D. a Moniali Ursulina composita.

13. Chronicae Ursulinarum impressae Venetiis 1705, tom. 1, in quibus habetur inserta Vita S.D. digesta ab Auctore. Prior vero editio horum Chronicarum gallico

idiomate prodiit anno 1673.

14. Historia Vitae V.S.D. impressa Bononiae 1621.

- 15. Regulae Societatis S. Ursulae Brixiae reimpressae in eadem Urbe 1620, pag. 3 et 4.
- 16. Historiae vitae V. Alexandri Luciaghi impressa Brixiae 1622, lib. 1, cap. 1, pag. 11: «Fu ancora per l'abbondanza grande dello spirito compagna principalissima, e coadiutrice della Beata Angela da Desenzano nella fondazione della nobilissima Compagnia delle Vergini di S. Orsola» et lib. 3, cap. 15, pag. 196: «Fu questa Compagnia con particolar rivelazione fondata in Brescia l'anno 1537 da una santa Vergine chiamata Suor Angela... quale nacque in Desenzano... adesso si tiene comunemente per Beata per qualche miracoli occorsi dopo la sua morte».

17. Ĥistoria Vitae cl. mem. Francisci Gonzagae Episcopi Mantuani Auctore P. Do-

nesmondi Soc. Jesu impressa Venetiis 1625, lib. 4, cap. 16, pag. 331.

- 18. Liber impressus Parisiis 1626 sub tit. Gallia Christiana, Auctore Claudio Roberto, pag. 65.
- 19. Regulae Societatis S. Ursulae Fulginei typis cusae in eadem Urbe 1626, pag. 49. 20. Historiae Vitae SS. et BB. Fulginei impressae in dicta Civitate 1628 Auctore Ludovico Jacobilli.

21. Liber inscriptus: La riche Alliance avec les SS. de Paradis typis cusus Lugduni 1638,

ad diem 21 martii, pag. 267.

22. Theatrum SS. et BB. Parmensium Auctore Ranutio Pico impressum Parmae 1642, pag. 327.

23. Regulae Societatis S.Ursulae Tarvisii impressae Venetiis 1643, pag. 3.

- 24. Alphabetum Augustinianum P. Thomae de Herrera impressum Matriti 1644, tom. 1, pag. 26 et tom. 2, pag. 287.
- 25. Liber impressus Lugduni 1645 sub titulo: *Devocion a S. Ursule* Auctore P. Paulo Barry, pag. 93, 105, 152, 159, 160 ad 169.
- 26. Opus inscriptum: *Colonia Agrippina* edit. ab Egidio Gelenio anno 1645, lib. 3, synt. 84, pag. 600 et seq.
- 27. Opus, cui titulus *S. Ursula Vindicata* Auctore P. Hermanno Crombach typis cuso Coloniae Agrippinae 1647, lib. 9, pag. 481 et lib. 11, pag. 1132, 1134 ad 1136.
- 28. Liber inscriptus: Bòlogna perlustrata Pauli Masini impresso anno 1650, num. 18.
- 29. Historia Vitae Catharinae de Montholon auctore P. Johanne Francisco Gennault impressa Parisiis 1653, pag. 34 et 266.
- 30. Opus de Imitatione Jesu Patientis P. Adriani Lyrei Antverpiae impresso 1655, lib. 2, cap. 12, pag. 110.

31. Historia Vitae SS. et Beatorum Provinciae Umbriae Auctore Ludovico Jacobilli impressae 1656 et 1661, tom. 1, pag. 355; tom. 3, pag. 444 et 448.

32. Menologium, sive Gineceus sacer SS. et Beatarum Foeminarum P. Arturio Mo-

nasteriensis impressum Parisiis 1656, ad diem 21 junii.

33. Liber typis cusus Valentianae anno 1656 sub titulo: *La Gloire de S. Ursule* Auctoris Anonymi, ed. Soc. Jesu Presbyteri, pag. 95, 101, 103, 225, 272, 323, 329, 339, 346, 351, 352, 354.

34. Chronologium Fratrum et Sororum tertii Ordinis Auctore P. Francisco Bordoni

impressum Romae 1656, cap. 36, pag. 139.

- 35. Liber inscriptus: Miroir des Vierges impressus Divione 1661, auctore P. Thoma de Blanc.
- 36. Ephemerides P. Domni Petri a S. Romualdo impressae Parisiis 1664, ad diem 21 martii, tom. 2, pag. 254.

37. Historia Vitae Ven. Servae Dei Margaritae de S. Xaverio impressa Parisiis 1665,

pag. 232 et 459.

38. Hierarchia Franciscana Patris Didaci Lequille impressa Romae 1664, tom. 1, pag. 42, et in alio opere eiusdem Auctoris, cui praefixus est titulus: Franciscus ter Legislator Romae pariter impresso 1667, tom. 2, pag. 527.

39. Liber inscriptus S. Ursule triomphante P. Damasi a S. Aloysio impressus Parisiis

1666, pag. 284, 289, 292, 293, 297, 302, 303.

40. Liber gallico idiomate Insulis impressus 1667 sub titulo: Portrait des ames amantes de Jesus rappresenté dans le personne d'Anne de Beaurais Auctore P. Jacobo Coret Societatis Jesu, pag. 32.

41. Opus P. Jacobi Labbetii impressum Leodii 1668, tom. 4, pag. 129.

- 42. Annales Ecclesiastici Henrici Spondani impressi Lugduni 1670, ad annum 1611.
- 43. Liber Gandavii typis cusus 1679 sub titulo: Directoire pour bien faire le principales action de la journée propre pour les Novices, et pour le Professes des Religeuses de S. Ursule de l'Istitut de Bordeaux, pag. 177.

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- 50. Echus Trinitaria P. Matthiae Llaul impressa Coloniae Agrippinae 1692, in echo 1, conc. 41, pag. 373.
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- 52. Annales Sacerdotii et Imperii Praesulis Battaglini impressi Venetiis 1701, tom. 1, pag. 192, ad annum 1611.
- 53. Liber inscriptus: Fulgor Fulginii in splendoribus Sanctorum auctore D. Ambrosio

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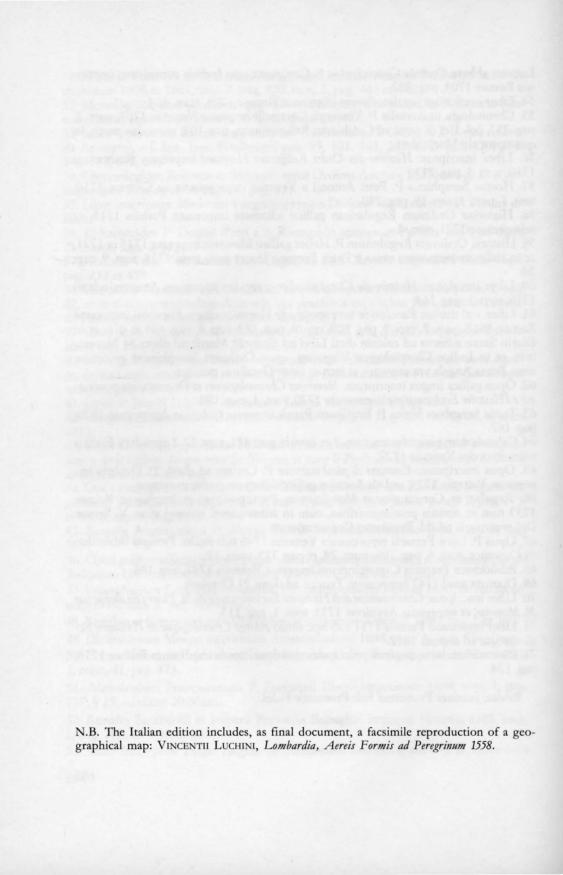
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# Rule of Angela Merici

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Your Parson Terrord Middle, \$15... Micro (activ tempera di Cinegge Ma-

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## **INDEX**

Abraham 183, 639 Abrégé chronologique 695 Abrégé de la Vie 51, 206 Absalon 619 Academy of Arcadians 60 - of Rezzato: v. Chizzola Giacomo of Science and Arts 65 - of the Occult 139 Acquafredda, Maria d' 437, 440 Acqui 475 Acta Ecclesiae Mediolanensis 39, 408, 532 Acta Sanctorum 261-263, 266-268 Acts of the Process of beatification and canonization: v. APC Adam 577 Adriatic 188, 457 Adro, Cominus de: v. Beatrix Advent 90, 122, 168, 537, 538, 546, 556 Advocatis, Maria de: v. Avogadro; Maria; Simona Aesculapius 183 Agents: v. Men Agnes ancilla Ursulae de Gavardo 580 de Chiodarolis 658, 672 - Jacobini Scarparotti 660 Agnese della Natività 15 Agostini Carlo 404 Agrippina: v. Cologne AGUUR 7, 19, 32, 33, 51, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 61, 78, 330, 409, 412, 416, 420, 429, 431, 436, 443, 445-450, 489, 494, 524 Albéron Charles 415 Albert I, Bibliothèque 52, 54 Alberti Jacopo 61, 83, 84 Pietro da Toscolano 409 Albricis, de: v. Peregrina

Abel 620

Albricis, Albrici, Albertinus de: v. Aurelia; Cecilia Alexander VI 195, 196 - VII 509 Alfianello: v. Cabrini Alfonso II of Este 499 Alghero 338 Allibert M. 64 All Saints' 122 All Souls' 306 Almici Caterina di Zono: v. Patengola Caterina Alovigio da Castione: v. Gonzaga Alps XXII, 201, 404, 422, 500 Amatis, Andrea Joannis de 362, 659 Ambrosiana Biblioteca: v. Biblioteca America 110, 444 Analecta Bollandiana 51, 261 Ancona 224 Andreana, Andrea, Andriana 270 - colonella of the Mercato Nuovo 300, 658, 659 - da Rumano 273, 372, 673 di Zanbelli 272 - Martialis de Zabellis 660 Natalis confectoris 581 - Natalis de Zabellis 272, 662, 663, 670 Andreasi Nicola 211 - Osanna XXIV, XXV, 172, 211, 212 Andreis, Andrea de 92 Andreis Francesco: v. Francesco da Desenzano Angel, angels 115, 122, 123, 125, 126, 188, 204, 230, 231, 248, 255, 268, 280, 459, 494, 518, 536, 541, 544, 547, 549, 555, 565, 574, 600-604, 606, 607, 620, 645, 682, 683, 685, 686, 688 Angela - birth 89, 243 - family XV, 3, 4, 6, 8, 50, 68, 77-90, 92, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99-105, 108, 123, 459, 539, 547, 593, 599, 603: v. Bianchi; Biancosi; Merici

- brothers, sister: v. Merici Giovanni

childhood and youth 7, 90-99, 99-102, 107-123, 126, 156, 598, 603, 606, 684, 685

Franciscan tertiary 46, 107, 117-124, 128-130, 131, 137, 196, 233, 234, 243, 245, 250, 278-281, 297, 327, 411, 579, 582, 583, 595, 598, 603, 657, 660, 662, 683-688

works of charity XVI, XXIV, XXIX, 9, 15, 129, 170, 174-175, 181, 208, 209, 599, 601, 607, 608, 649, 657

works of piety 101, 105, 113, 118, 121, 122, 129, 156, 170, 582, 584-589, 595, 596, 598-602, 606, 607, 649, 657

foundress XV, XVI, XXIV, XXVII, 4, 68, 69, 125, 127, 147, 160, 161, 162, 163, 198, 234, 238, 242, 248, 251, 255, 257, 269, 276, 280, 281, 286, 287, 296, 297, 304, 306, 311, 312, 314, 318, 330, 332, 333, 349, 352, 353, 400, 411, 412, 415, 416-419, 421, 428, 431, 439, 440, 443, 446, 448, 450, 451, 454, 455, 457, 460, 465, 468, 470, 471, 479, 480, 483, 484, 500, 504, 507, 510, 517, 526, 551, 552, 571, 572, 575, 579, 588, 589, 591, 606, 621, 622, 657, 660, 662, 664

election 21, 29, 32, 67, 70, 71, 86, 135, 239, 271, 272, 277, 291, 299, 301, 304, 309, 352, 359, 365, 417, 427, 435, 479, 579-581, 606, 619, 630, 641-644, 654, 674, 679, 682, 687

Writings 19, 22, 69, 109, 134, 166, 191, 207, 285, 286, 295, 314, 351, 401, 411, 419, 455, 472, 481: v. Rule, Regola; Ricordi; Testamento

luoghi pii 197, 198, 202-206, 208-210, 221-224, 419, 434, 446, 597, 604, 605

illness, death, burial XVI, 11, 89, 181, 229, 230, 231, 237, 240-251, 282, 304, 306, 317, 352, 386, 387, 389, 407, 410, 411, 435, 436, 474, 582, 583, 590, 593, 594, 599-601, 606, 608, 609, 657, 668, 688

renown 33, 77, 78, 138, 156, 166, 176, 196, 197, 203, 205, 206, 245, 349, 350, 407, 409, 410, 414, 415, 418, 419, 420, 421, 422, 423, 424, 427, 434, 438, 446, 518, 593, 596-598, 627

- opposition: v. Company of St Ursula

- cult XVIII, 4, 33, 78, 104, 127, 350, 409-413, 414, 418-424, 429, 430, 447, 505

beatification and canonization 6, 37, 52, 60,62, 64, 407, 408, 409, 415-417, 428, 429, 430,431, 432, 433, 442, 443, 444-447, 473, 480-

482, 484, 485, 505

-- decrees 429-432, 440-443, 447, 482, 484 Angela, Anzola 410

- ancilla Lucretiae de Luzago 309, 581

personal maid of Ginevra Luzzago 669

- de Maria colonella 300

- de Pontoliis 658, 672

- Thomae de Serlis 300, 371, 658, 660, 672 Angelica de Paterno 672

Angelico di Milano 191

Angelus 125: v. Ave Maria, hour of Angers, Episcopus Andegaven. 691 Angolo 299

Anguisola Caterina: v. Gonzaga Angulo, Paulus de: v. Clara

Anita de Fischettis 672 Anna di Phanuel 538, 546, 559

Anna di S. Agostino, Ven. 63 Annaert Philippe 52, 53, 416

Annali Brescia 17, 18

- Carità 17, 18, 155, 209, 223

- Orfanelle Pietà 17, 18

Ospitale Incurabili 17, 18
 Anne du St Sacrement Quarré 53

Année spirituelle 694

Annibale Marchina Mariella 15 Annuntiata, Anuntiata, Nunciata

- de Bovegno 672

- della Zoppa 658

di Milioli 657
 Francisci Boni de Homis 581, 657, 660, 672

- in domo Monachae de Malazistis 581

Antechristo 638, 643 Antolini Giovanni 671 Antonia

- ancilla Helisabet Prato 672

Antonii de Nozia 660Bernardi de Lothis 660

- da Riviera 658

- de Gargnano 581

- de Hasta 672

- de Isipinis 672

- de Salodio 672

- de Trentinis 672

- di Giorgio da Trento 658

di Pelizoni 657

Ginevra Luzzago household 669
 Antonio de Imerigho: v. Merici

Antonius barberius: v. Catharina; Martha

beretarius: v. Victoria
 Anzola: v. Angela

Anzolini 94

APC 6, 7, 13, 19, 21, 23-27, 33, 34, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 47, 51, 57, 67, 103, 104, 127, 128, 146, 165, 170, 248, 279, 280, 292, 293, 299, 330, 349, 350, 352-356, 407-450, 472, 473 Apostles XVI, 159-162, 289, 533, 574, 624,

634, 643, 645, 656

Apostolic Legate of Venice 357, 366, 367, 370 Apostolic Penitentiary 30, 70, 233, 234, 244, 334, 582, 583

Apostolic visit XVII, 32, 353, 399, 400, 404, 460, 461

Apostolic See 645: v. Holy See Aquila Julius, Giulio 377, 617 Aquitania 420

Aratoribus de, Aradori: v. Martha Archangels 459, 547, 561

Archconfraternity of St Angela: v. Confraternity

Archdeacon 327, 336: v. Durante Aurelio Archintus Card. J. 442, 443

Archives

- Bergamo 19

- Brescia 9, 10, 15, 16, 19, 22, 28, 31, 34, 43, 58, 67, 71, 85, 131, 143, 147, 150, 323, 345, 355, 356, 372, 376, 377, 401, 404, 417, 425, 476, 482
- Desenzano 4, 7, 19, 75, 80, 85, 87, 123, 124, 413
- Milan 4, 19, 35, 39, 242, 399, 400, 404, 461, 514
- Parma 339
- Rome 33
- Salò 19, 75, 83
- Vatican City 7, 19, 30-33, 34, 40, 334, 367, 417, 483
- Venice 19, 34, 61, 78, 328, 417, 427 Archivio Storico Lombardo XXIX

- Veneto 11

Archpriest 327, 336: v. Savallo Donato Ardesio, Antonius de: v. Victoria Aretino Pietro XXIII, XXIX Ariosto Ludovico XXV Arras 206

Arricordi: v. Ricordi

Arrivabene Ludovico 377, 617

Ascension 114, 116, 169, 187, 457, 538, 546, 559, 596, 606

Assensa 588

Assumption: v. Virgin Mary Asti family 149

- v. Bernardino da

Atti notarili: v. Notarial acts

Attila 260, 261

Aubenas 52

Augsburg, Augusta Vindelicorum 702

Augustina de Cacettis 672

Augustinian nuns 323

Aurelia

Albertini de Albricis 581

- di Colosini 373

- Horatii de Pugnatoribus 658, 660, 672

Austria: v. Margarita of

Ave Maria 165, 538, 542, 547, 551, 560, 568, 586, 588

- hour of 97

Averoldi, Averoldo Annibale di Hieronimo 133

- Cesare 217

Avignon 500, 501, 503, 504

Avogadro, Advocatis de 47

- Antonio Maria 306, 307, 580

Costanza di Pietro 307

- Maria 277, 306, 307, 326, 574, 580

- Pietro di Antonio 307

Avogadro-Ferrazzi Lucrezia: v. Luzzago Lucre-

Avvisatrice, avvisatrici 301, 398, 401, 466, 467,

Aymericis: v. Merici

Babilonia 594

Bacchiocco Carlo 687

Backer, Fr de 52

Bagatta Bonifacio 694

- Pietro 104, 127

Bagnagatto Calimero 580

Bagnolo Mella 281

Bahia, Brazil 420

Balkans 186, 188

Baltheo Giulio 147, 312, 365, 369, 663-666, 669 Balzarotti Bartolomeus Ioannis 671

- Ioannes de Sonico Valtrompia 671, 673

Baptista aurifex: v. Lucretia

Barbara 270, 648

- Augustini de Valtortis, Valtorta 299, 662, 663

- de Isipinis 672

- de Monteclaro 274, 298, 299, 580

- di Fontani, Fontana 274

- of Austria 499

Barbarano 409

Barbary 190, 604 Barbiano di Belgioioso Emilio: v. Belgioioso Barbo Ludovico XXX Barcho, Antonius de: v. Maria Bardinello Zoan Jacomo, Giacomo 223, 224, 582 Barghe, de Bargis: v. Catharina Bargnana, Bargnani, Bargnano - Barbara 368 Giovan Paolo 368 - Isabetta 18, 148, 149, 153, 154, 225: v. Prato - Natività 374, 376, 602, 672 Thoma Antonii de 671 - Vincenzo 148 Barletta 112 Barnabites XXIII, XXIV Baronio Cesare 489 Barozzi Nicolò 171 Barry Paolo 693 Barsotti Divo XVIII, 452 Bartolomeo, Patengola household 133 Basle 264 Bassa V. 334, 611, 612 Bassano 80: v. Ziletti Bastarolo (the) 499, 500 Battaglini 694 Battaglioli F. 220 Bavaria 557 Elector of 57, 690: v. Ferdinand Marie Beatrice d'Este 177 Beatrix Comini de Adro 581 Beguines 192 Béjot Marie-Paule 19 Belasi, Bellaso, Bellasio Gabriele 365-369, 665 Belentano: v. Bellintani Belgioioso Emilio, Barbiano di 177 Belgium 450 Belgrade 186 Bellintani Mattia da Salò 9, 44-49, 57, 85, 92, 100, 101, 108-110, 115, 116, 124, 125, 128, 129, 130, 166, 170, 179, 180, 188-190, 192, 202, 203, 211, 212, 232, 238, 239, 241, 244, 297, 409, 417, 423, 426, 435, 439, 490 Bellinus M. Antonius 518 Beltrame da Martinengo: v. Elisabeth Benaco 75, 603 Benaglia Francesco 222

Bergamo XXIV, 76, 337, 338, 521 Biblioteca Civica 19, 144, 217, 223 - Biblioteca dei Preti del Sacro Cuore 521 Dimesse 521 Vicar general 337 Bermond, Françoise de 500-503 Bernardino d'Asti XXIV da Feltre 120 Berri Francesco 343, 615 Bertalis, de: v. Catharina Bertazzoli Bertazzolo 83 - Stefano 84, 179, 180, 224 - Tomaso, Tomasino 83 Bertazzuoli de Rossi: v. Bertazzoli Stefano Bertellis, Bartholomaeus de: v. Ioanna Bertholino, Ginevra Luzzago household 669 Bertoldi, Iacomino di: v. Catharina Bertoletti Maria 275 Bertolino Boscoli: v. Boscoli Bertolinus Imerici: v. Merici servant of Ginevra Luzzago 669 Bertolinus de Leno 157, 275, 277, 301: v. Garginis; Lucretia; Maria; Scholastica Bertolis, Iacobinus de: v. Flora Bertolotti Garioni Giuditta 13, 44, 62-65, 109 Besançon 694 Archiepiscopus Bisuntin. 691 Besenzanis, de: v. Iulia Bethel 192 Betheleme 599, 605 Betinus camparius 97 Beyer, J. 349 Bianca: v. Blancha Bianchi, de Blanchis, de Bianchi 84, 130, 188 - Biancoso de 7, 83, 84, 103, 108 - Caterina 84: v. Merici - Giambatista 150, 235-237 Biancosa 83, 84 Biancosi, Biancoso 7, 70, 74, 83, 103, 118 - Bartolomeo 8, 83, 84, 108, 188, 189, 201, 224, 596, 604 - Girardo 84 Bible 90, 113, 134, 144, 166, 538-540, 543, 546, 548, 549, 554, 559, 560, 562, 564, 566, 570, 571, 573, 598, 601, 607, 620, 632, 643, 645, 654, 686 - Acts 161 Apocalypse 178, 601, 607, 641

- I Corinthians 161

II Corinthians 601, 608

Benedict XIV 60, 426, 442

XV 511: v. Della Chiesa

Benedictines XXIX

Berchet Guglielmo 171

- Ezekiel 291

- Judges 174

- Matthew 339

- New Testament 166, 178, 601, 607

- Old Testament 178, 601, 607

- Penitential Psalms 164, 165, 538, 546, 560

- Prophets 178, 601, 607

- Psalms 178, 459, 573, 600, 607

Biblioteca, Library

- Albert I, Brussels 52, 54

- Ambrosiana, Milan 19

Apostolica Vaticana 19, 21, 24, 28, 30, 32, 334, 462

- Civica, Bergamo 19, 144, 217, 223

- Comunale, Verona 427

- Mazarine, Paris 19, 48

- Nationale, Paris 19, 33, 417, 425, 437, 439

- Nazionale, Rome 416

Queriniana, Brescia 8-14, 19, 21, 22, 26, 27, 28, 41, 42, 45-50, 58, 62, 65-68, 139, 461

- Statale, Cremona 480, 523

Trivulziana, Milan XVIII, XX, XXIII, XXVIII, 20: v. Rule

- Vallicelliana, Rome 39

Biblioteca Frati Minori Capp. 49

Bibliotheca Sanctorum XIX

Bibliothèque Compagnie de Jésus 49

Bichi Alessandro 500, 502

Biel Gabriel 119

Bighelli Vincenzo 23, 25, 27, 42, 292, 353, 376

Bizzoni Marcantonio 489, 491

Blanc, Thoma de 692, 694

Blancha, Bianca de Portulachis: v. Porcelaga

- de Seraphinis 672

- di Martinoni 657

- Francisci de Buulco 581

- Iacobi Fachini 660

Blanchis, Blanchosius de: v. Bianchi Biancoso

Blessed Sacrament 119, 163, 491

Blitterswijk, Blitterswik, Guillaume de, Giovan-

ni 15, 54

Blois 448-450, 487

Blood 184, 459, 539, 547, 561, 569, 574, 575,

645, 650

Blosius: v. Palladio

Boarno Bernardino 293, 332, 579, 650

Bocca Gaspare 408

Boccaccio Giovanni XXIII

Boccarelli Luca 440

Boeck Fr 55

Bohemia 45, 690

Boiolis, Vincentius de 596

Bolasiis, Gabriel de 671, 672

Bolla: v. Bull

Bollani Domenico XXI, XXVIII, 31, 41, 285, 358, 368, 386, 387, 401, 408, 460, 505, 603,

617

Bologna 15, 224, 229, 321, 322, 339, 467, 469: v. Serafino da

- Archbishopric Archives 505

- Biblioteca Archiginnasio 506

Company of St Ursula 321, 322, 505-513

- San Petronio 230

- Vicar general 469

Bombardieri Antonio fu Giovanni 152

Bombardiero Marc'Antonio 152, 153, 225

Bombellis, Marcus de: v. Lucia

Bon: v. Dominica

Bona Costantino di Maffeo 657

Boncompagni: v. Volta Boncompagni Ippolita

Bonelli Giuseppe 16, 17

Bonellis, Franciscus de: v. Margarita

Boni Franciscus de Homis: v. Annuntiata

Boniface VIII 612, 656

Bonis, Christoforus de: v. Margarita

- Iovita de, Giovita 312, 365, 663

- Vincentius de, Vincenzo 367, 667

Bonomelli Vittorio XXI

Bonvicini Alessandro: v. Moretto

- Caterina 373

Books: v. Libri

Boonen Jacques 52

Bordeaux 347, 412, 418-420, 423, 429

Bordoni Francesco 694

Borgia Lucrezia 134

Borgonovo Piacentino 368

Bornado, Bornato v. Elisabeth; Gorella; Maria;

Simona

- de Navis Ioannis Maria 271: v. Simona

Simona Morganti de: v. Simona

Borni: v. Simona

Borromeo Charles XVII, XXIV, XXVI, XXVII, XXVII, XXVIII, 32, 38, 39, 50, 64, 285, 294, 313, 324, 346, 353, 373, 387, 388, 398-404,

408, 418, 420, 435, 446, 460, 461, 465, 466-468, 476, 494, 496, 501, 505, 513, 516-519,

532, 584

Boschet Marie-Vianney 415, 416

Boschi alti: v. Boscoli

Boscoldis de Ottalengo 157: v. Boscoli

Boscoli, Boscolis, de 156, 157

- Bertolino 157, 165, 166

Bertolino fu Girardo di boschi alti 41, 156,

Caterina 156

- Gianmaria, Joannes Maria 156, 595

Joannes Baptista Bertolini 156, 595

Boselli Camillo 34 Bossaglia Rossana 278 Bossini Giambattista 58

Bourdeaux: v. Bordeaux

Bourg-en-Bresse 412 Bourguignon Claude 501

Bovegno, de: v. Annuntiata; Giovanni; Sibaldis

- Betinus de: v. Catharina

Ioannes Martini de 579: v. Giovanni

Bovio Giuseppe 678, 682 Bozolis, Apolonius de: v. Iulia Bozonis, de: v. Iulia

Brachetti Giacomo 434

Bramantino 278

Branchino da Paratico 171

Brazil 416

Brescia 32, 76, 113, 114, 328

- Archives Capitular 19, 58, 150

- Archives Diocesan 19

- Archives Episcopal 19, 31, 376, 404, 417, 425, 476, 482

Archives Filippini 9, 26, 372, 417

- Archives State 9, 15, 16, 19, 22, 28, 31, 34, 67, 71, 143, 147, 345

Archivio Storico Civico 10, 85, 131

Arsenal 151

- Biblioteca Queriniana 8-10, 12-14, 21, 22, 26, 27, 28, 41, 42, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 58, 62, 65, 67, 68, 461

- Bishopric 551, 552, 616

- Casa S. Angela 510, 511, 512, 513

- Cathedral, Duomo, piazza del 150-152, 225, 234, 238, 241, 276, 300, 326, 327, 343, 552, 595, 596, 656, 657, 671: v. Peregrina

- Chapter of the Cathedral 690

Cittadella Nova 148

- Cittadella Vecchia 148, 659

- Commune and Councils 31, 136, 140, 377, 617, 618, 692: v. Libri del Comune

- Company, Dimesse 237, 247, 424, 425, 462, 467, 470-474, 484, 494, 584, 587, 616, 688

- Company of St Angela 487

- Company, Pious Union 477, 478

Council 226, 244

- Diocesan Seminary 266

Episcopal Curia 31, 323, 377, 425, 426, 469,

474, 617, 618, 653

- Episcopus Brixien.: v. Bollani; Cornaro; Molino

- Fons Dulcianorum 306, 671

- Garzetta 210, 219, 220

- General Council 218, 219

- Grand Theatre 151

- Mercato Nuovo 152, 300, 358, 615, 618, 619, 622, 623, 631: v. Andreana

Monastero della Pace 307, 337, 342, 589

Monastero S. Giovanni 13

- Monastero Santa Croce 132, 133, 134

- Monte 593

Munizion del Principe 150

- Novarino 148

- Paganora 151

- Pinacoteca Tosio Martinengo 280

- Porta Torre 665

- Quadra Citadellae 80

- S., SS.

-- Afra (alias S. Salvatore) 12, 35, 49, 50, 156, 231, 233, 234, 237, 238, 239, 242, 243, 244, 248, 249, 250, 276, 280, 293, 299, 300, 306, 352, 371, 409, 410, 414, 436, 446, 473, 474, 579, 582, 583, 597, 599, 601, 606, 608, 657-659, 668, 670, 671: v. Margarita

-- Agata 138

-- Alessandro 134

-- Angela 249, 446

Antonio da Caneto 617

Barnaba 156, 166, 177, 231, 307, 597-599, 605, 669

Bartolomeo, Bartholomaeus 149, 361, 657

Benedictus 665

-- Clemente 139, 163, 231, 232, 267, 599

-- Croce 280

-- Faustino 171, 172, 300, 658, 659

-- Faustinus and Jovita 233, 582, 583

Gaetano 386, 388

Giovanni 12, 148, 300, 657, 659

-- Joseph 669

-- Lorenzo 220

Maria Calcharia, Calchera 669, 671

Maria della Pace 38, 386, 388: v. Filippini

Maria de Carmeni 147

Maria Miraculorum 665: v. Marietta

Nazaro e Celso, Nazarius and Celsus 239, 300, 589, 658, 659: v. Angela da Serli

Petrus et Marcellinus 598

-- Pietro in Oliveto 266, 386, 387

Salvatore 238: v. S. Afra

-- Ursula 280, 281, 356, 421, 424, 425, 451, 587, 588, 679-688

-- Zeno 222

Ursuline monastery 461

- Via Moretto 280

- Via Trieste 151

Via X Giornate 151

Via XI Febbraio 151

Breslau (Wrocław), Breslavien. Episcopus 691

Bressani: v. Clara

Bressanone, Episcopus Brixinen. 691

Brevi cenni 416, 444

Brictola, Britula 261

Brief

Alexander VI, 1500 196

- Clement VII, 1525 197, 217

- Gregory XIII, 1582 39, 346-348, 502-504, 518, 519

- Innocent XI, 1688 420

– Leo XIII, 1901 484

- Paul III, 1541 337, 342

- Sixtus V, 1587 409, 410

Britain 263, 264

British Museum 19, 21, 28

Brivio Giovanni Battista 523

Brixia: v. Brescia

Brixia Sacra XXI, 285, 338

Brixianis, de: v. Innocentia

Brooks Memorial Gallery 277

Brudazzo, Brodazzo: v. Desenzano

Brunelli Benvenuto 224

Brunello Luigi di Paride 424

Brusa Carlo 86, 88, 89

Brussels

- Bibliothèque Albert Ier 52, 54

Bucceleni Giovan Francesco 462

Bull

- Clement VII, 1526 17, 226

- Clement VII, 1535 225

Clement IX, 1667 420

- Julius II, 1508 120

- Leo X, 1513 217

- Leo X, 1520 218

- Nicholas IV, 1289 121, 234

- Paul III, 1535 18, 153

- Paul III, 1544 (Company of Jesus) 347

- Paul V, 1618 420, 525

- Pius IX, 1854 475

Bull of Paul III, 1544 (Company of St Ursula) XVIII, 30, 46, 64, 67, 70, 322, 325-350, 352, 357, 376, 377, 421, 454, 467-469, 485, 502, 552, 606, 609-611, 617, 641, 644-656, 662, 689

- authentic transcription: v. Privilegia Virginum

 executors, conservators: v. Men; Durante Aurelio; Gentile Agostino; Savallo Donato; Soldo Carlo

- executory mandate 31, 334-337, 341-345, 376, 469, 471, 483, 611, 612, 617

- executory process 14, 29, 31, 325, 327, 343-345, 351, 352, 357, 612-656

- intimatio et depositio 344, 345, 656

- petition 31, 311, 330-334, 336, 345

Bullae Romanorum 347

Bullarium Franciscanum 121

Bullarium Romanum 445, 446

Bulls 334, 335, 347, 420

Burali Paolo 442

Burchard 381

Burghesius S. 690

Burigozzo Gianmarco 177

Bus, César de 500

Bussis, Ioannes de 662

Butia: v. Buzzi

Butiis, Martha Camilli de: v. Buzzi; Martha Buulco, Franciscus de: v. Blancha

Buzzi

- Antonia 307

- Camillo 142, 307

- Marta 658, 660, 672

Veronica 29, 40, 155, 271, 273, 275, 300, 307, 308, 309, 327, 352, 357, 358, 359, 360, 361, 364, 365, 367-369, 371-374, 376, 377, 386, 390, 391, 574, 595, 602, 617, 657, 658, 661, 662: v. Margarita

Cabrini, Cabrino Francesco da Alfianello 26, 69, 372, 373, 386, 387, 594

Cabrol-Leclercq 260, 262

Cacettis, de: v. Augustina

Cadore: v. Vigo

Caimi Bernardino 213

Cain 620

Caino, Cayno Anzolus de: v. Laura

Cairns Christopher XX-XXX, 11, 41

Cajetan of Thiene XXIII, 120, 134, 180, 197, 224

Calahorra, Ivan de 191

Calcinis, Ioannes Dominici de 589, 590

Calini, Calinus Ludovicus 250, 430, 439

Calisto da Lodi 245

Calvary 191

Calvasezio, Calvazesio: v. Sanctina

Calvisano 135: v. Floramons

Camaldolese XXIII

Cambrai 229, 420

Camerino 339

Camilla Francisci de Tirandis 581, 660

Tiranda 657

Campanari Cecilia: v. Gallo Cecilia

Campari, camparo 81, 82, 92-96, 97, 99

Campolo Alovisio fu Agostino 149

Campori Pietro 523

Canada 412, 416

Canali Floriano 12, 13, 113

Candia 192-193, 596, 604

Chancellor: v. Filetto

- Duke, Vice-Duke: v. Minio Marco

Candida 132, 133

Canea 190, 596, 604

Caneto: v. Brescia, S. Antonio

Canonical Hours 122, 165

Canons XXVIII

- Cathedral 150, 151, 244, 332, 462, 658

- Lateran 8, 166, 181, 231, 238, 244, 248, 277, 306, 414, 582, 583, 599, 657, 668, 671, 687,

S. Giovanni Evangelista 244

Cantarane Bartholomeo: v. Maria

Cantarini Giovanni 89

Canti Gio. Vincenzo 136, 220

Cantù Cesare 62

Capirolis, de: v. Elisabeth; Martha

Samaritana de: v. Martha

Capitoli della Confraternita 216

Capitularium sive privilegia: v. Libri, Primo Libro Generale

Capodicasa M. 200

Capreolo, Capriolo: v. Catharina; Elisabeth; Martha

Capriano 135

Capuchins XXIII, XXIV, 44, 45, 46, 49, 77, 78, 87, 250, 409, 413, 466, 490, 679: v. Francesco da Desenzano

Caracciolo: v. S. Francesco

Carafa Gian Pietro XXIII, XXIX

Caraffa Pier Luigi 51 Caraman Philip 145

Carasis, Ioanisbonus de: v. Catharina

Caré Père 53: v. Quarré

Carità: v. Luogo Pio della Carità

Carpaccio 266

Casali Cecilia di Peregrina 273

- Peregrina 273

Casalibus, de: v. Dominica

Casariis, de: v. Elisabeth; Ioanna Maria

Caser: v. Desenzano

Cassano allo Ionio 338

Castellani Carlo di Francesco 381, 587

Castelli G. 200

Castelli Maria Teresa 71

Castello, Annibal de 224

Castenedolo 135

Castione, Castiono a Stiveris, Castiglione delle Stiviere 174, 211: v. Catharina; Flora; Honoria; Maria; Martha; Paula

Cominus de: v. Flora

- Marcolinus de: v. Catharina; Flora; Honoria

Prioris, Io. Iacobus de 659

Castrinis, Franciscus de 673

- Ioannes Antonius de 672, 673

Catalaunian Plain 261

Catalina: v. Catharina

Catalogo 246

Catastico 84, 149

Cathaneis, Andrea de 666, 668

Catharina, Catalina, Catarina, Caterina

ancilla Ioannis de Chizolis 581

Andreae del Mangan 581

Antoni barberii 581

- Antoni de Ioannis, Iovanettis de Bargis 662,

- Antoni de Merzadris de Riperia Sallodii, de Salodio 662, 664

- Antoni Gosii, de Gotiis 272, 581, 660, 662,

Baptistae de Panadellis, Panatellis, Panateris 581, 660, 662, 663

Bartolomei de Margnaga 660

Bertolini de Travavado 581

- Betini de Bovegno 662, 664

- Christophori de Grossis 581, 660, 662; 663

da Gedi 657

- de Bertalis 672

- de Capreolo 657, 660

de Iacomino di Bertoldi 658

- de Paterno 672

di Bonvicini 373

- di Gatusi 657

Dolci, Dolza 272

- Francisci de Claris 660, 673

Francisci de Tayardellis 581, 660

- Iacobi de Sancta Euphemia 581

Ioanisboni de Carasis 660

Ioannis de Gattis 581

Ioannis Francisci de Monticellis 581, 660, 662, 663

Lucae de Trimusio 662, 663
Marcolini de Castiono 581

- Nocenti de Marochis 581

Prato household 155
Romano household 138

- Sebastiani de Coradinis 662, 664

- serva Genebriae de Luzago 660

- Sor 155

- wife of Giovanni Merici: v. Merici

Catholic Encyclopedia XIX

Catholic Reform XXII, XXIII, XXVI, XXVII, XXVII, XXVIII, XXIX, XXX, 380, 521

Cattaneo Andrea degli Umiliati 35, 366, 370,

374

Cattani Lucrezia: v. Lodrone Lucrezia
Cause of beatification and canonization:
v. Process

Cazago, Martha de: v. Theodora

- Martino da: v. Flora

Cazali: v. Casali Cazalochi: v. Iulia

Cazari, Casari: v. Ioanna Maria

Cazzago Gio. Piero 378

Cecilia Albertini de Albricis, Albrici 371, 581, 660, 672

- di Peregrina 300, 658

Cegulis, Mapheus Iacobi de 666

Celeri Giorgio 79 Cellatica 132

Ceremonial: v. Ritual

Cerigo, Cithera, Kithara 193

Ceruti Prasside 589 Cervelli I. XXVIII

Cervia 230

Cesano, de: v. Francisca

Cesareni, Joannes Antonius de 363

Cesenatico 224 Chambéry 134

Charles V 143, 229, 230, 303, 596, 597, 605

Charles VIII 216

Chazalochis, Vincentius de: v. Iulia

Cherubino da Spoleto, Fra 119

Chiara: v. Clara

Chiodarolis, de: v. Agnes

Chiodi 150

Chiusano Nicolao 639

Chizzola XV, 140: v. Catharina; Ursula

- Augustino 141, 144

- Aurelia 141

- Camilla 141

- Camillo 141

- Caterina 29, 141, 142, 352, 404

Faustino 141G. Giacomo 140

- Giacomo 42, 112, 113, 114, 140-144, 166, 167, 178, 210, 222, 223, 240, 313, 374, 596,

608, 671-673

 Giovan Antonio di Pietro fu Francesco 141, 142

- Giovan Battista 141, 142

- Giovanni 140, 141, 218, 223, 277

- Giulio 149

- Hieronimo 141

- Hippolito 313

- Lothar 140

- Ludovico 140, 141, 144, 596

- Nicola 141

- Paolo 141

- Pietro fu Francesco 142

Christian Doctrine 395, 396, 419, 488, 495-499, 500, 501, 503, 508, 516, 594

Christiana of Denmark 178

Christmas 119, 122, 168, 339, 600, 606

Chronica 46

Chroniques 53, 55, 207, 411, 418, 501, 503, 523, 692, 693

Church XXIII, XXVI, XXVIII, 4, 15, 30, 116, 119, 168, 240, 286, 287, 329, 338, 339,

340, 349, 395, 396, 401, 407, 410, 420, 443, 445, 447, 449, 450, 454, 485, 493, 517, 519,

445, 447, 449, 450, 454, 485, 495, 517, 519, 525, 533, 534, 537, 538, 540, 546, 548, 558,

564, 573, 620, 624, 626, 627, 632-641, 643, 646, 650-652

- primitive XVI, 159, 160, 289, 533, 578, 624, 630, 633, 637, 638, 642, 643

Ciaconius 340

Cicilia: v. Sicily

Cicogna Emanuele Antonio 197, 198

Cilicio: v. Hair-shirt

Cinalia, Cinalei, Cinalii, Cinaliis de: v.Ursula

- Angelus, Anzolus: v. Laura

- Franciscus 671

- Marcus Antonius: v. Damisella; Derusiana

Cincture XVII, 155, 235, 236, 271, 308, 317, 322-324, 325-327, 333, 348, 357, 362, 364,

376, 384, 399, 455, 456, 458 Cipriano di Giovanni Concagnino 293

Ciprianus de Bornado: v. Maria

Cistellini Antonio XV, 56, 69, 70, 85, 132, 133,

140, 145, 174, 179, 208, 209, 212, 217, 219, 222, 224

Cithera: v. Cerigo

Cittanova d'Istria, di Schiavonia, Novigrad 194, 597

Cizola Iulio 149

Clara, Chiara 270, 648

- apud Paulum de Angulo 274, 298, 299, 580

- Beltrami de Pacheris, Pachieris 299, 662, 663

- Bressani de Peschiera 660

- de Desenzanis 672

- Gaffurra, Gaffurri, Gafurri 273, 648

- Martinengo, da 274, 299

- Martinengo, di 274, 299

Claris, Francisci de: v. Catharina

Claudio Roberto 693

Clausura: v. Enclosure

Claverinus Domenicus 426

Clematius 260

Clement VII XXIV, 17, 201, 203, 204, 205, 206, 222, 229, 230, 446, 583, 597, 605, 646, 686

- VIII 489, 501

- IX 421

- XI 420

- XIII 429, 430, 431, 432, 443, 690

- XIV 433

Clergy XX, XXI, 340, 342, 455

Cobelluti Scipione 489

Cobiato, de: v. Dominica

Coccaglio 149

Cocialibus, de: v. Cozzano

Cocianus: v. Cozzano

Collibus, Colibus, Ioannes de: v. Iacobina

- Mafeus de: v. Flora

Cologne, Colonia 51, 54, 183, 259-262, 264, 265, 267, 415

- Archbishop Elector of 690

Colombino Giovanni, Bl. 91

Colombo Giovanna 20

Colonella, colonelle XVI, 29, 145, 164, 165, 240, 275, 284, 286, 289, 294-301, 310, 313, 318, 319, 336, 359, 360, 362, 365, 371, 381, 388, 389, 390-394, 396, 397-398, 460, 467, 517, 569, 577, 593, 626, 653, 658, 659, 689

Colonello, colonelli 29, 81, 86, 270, 296, 297, 300, 301, 313, 389-392, 393, 394, 395-397, 400, 404, 496

Colonna Vittoria XXV

Colosini, Aurelia di 373

Combes Emile 450

Comincini Francesco 50

Comini: v. Beatrix; Flora

- Maria Angela 437, 440

Commentari Ateneo 21, 146

Como 133, 177

Companies of St Ursula XVII, 51, 423, 448 Company

- of Christian Doctrine 499

 of Divine Love, del Divino Amore: v. Divine Love

- of Jesus XXII, 46, 60, 61, 63, 206, 521, 691

- of the Daughters of the Madonna 523

- of the Dimesse of the Madonna 521, 522

- of the Fathers of Peace: v. Filippini

- of the Immaculate 482, 512

- of the Madonna 522

Company of St Ursula XV, 3

- approval 278, 292, 293, 294, 317, 327-329,

331, 332, 644, 647, 655

- archives 14, 25, 43, 59, 233, 276, 317, 323, 335, 350, 353, 355, 356, 377, 401, 408, 424, 425, 455, 461, 467, 469

- common spiritual father 288, 294, 373, 396,

400, 540, 548, 563, 594

difficulties XVI, 240, 256, 283, 314, 317, 318, 319, 320, 321, 358, 455, 616, 631, 632, 638, 651

- diffusion 37

- division XVII, 240, 289, 322, 329, 357, 361-371, 486, 663-668

government XVI, XVII, 9, 165, 237, 284, 286, 288, 289-314, 317, 336, 358, 359, 360, 362, 364, 366, 375, 376, 380, 382, 388, 389, 390, 392, 397, 399, 403, 404, 459, 460, 462, 466, 468, 470, 471, 472, 481, 490, 497, 502, 508, 514, 517, 541, 550, 551, 566-568, 603, 652, 653

identity XXVIII, XXIX, 162, 163, 207, 223, 255, 256, 257, 258, 268, 269, 283, 285-287, 289, 349, 453, 507, 526, 553-556, 579, 593

members XXVI

- opposition 319, 320, 329, 454, 627, 628, 631, 633, 634

origin and foundation XVII, XX, XXII, XXIV, XXVI, XXVII, XXIX, XXX, 3, 9, 40, 68, 127, 164, 176, 215, 229, 232-234, 239, 253, 257, 275, 277-283, 332, 446, 453, 454, 605, 606, 621, 622, 647

- restoration 68, 451, 473, 475, 476, 477

- reunification 271, 300, 307, 357, 358, 365, 371, 373, 375, 378, 386

- structures XV, XVII, XXVI, XXVII, XXVIII, 164, 223, 258, 268, 283, 284, 288-290, 296, 301, 311, 314, 375, 380-383, 388, 390, 391, 393-396, 400, 460, 462, 474, 481, 502, 517, 579, 580, 660, 662, 663

- suppression XVII

- virgins of the Company XXVI, 19, 42, 50, 124, 125, 154, 156, 160-164, 198, 207, 215, 220, 232, 236, 242, 270, 276, 283, 284, 288-292, 297, 298, 301, 302, 304, 306, 318, 319, 321, 324, 348, 352, 358, 359, 360, 362, 366, 367, 371, 385-389, 392, 398, 403, 452-454, 458, 488, 493, 498, 502, 515, 516, 534, 568, 571, 572, 574, 575, 589, 593, 602, 606, 608, 610, 611, 632, 634, 640-642, 647, 648, 650, 653, 655, 656, 660, 662, 667, 682

Company of St Ursula of Naples 524

- of the Virgins of St Ursula 525

Compendio 206, 506

Compendio de gli Instituti 505

Compieta, Compline 538, 547, 560, 677

Compostella 183, 195 Comtat Venaissin 500

Concagninis, Cyprianus Ioanini de 293

Concessio 294, 456, 551, 689

Concordia 224

Confession 118, 395, 396, 431, 432, 463, 496, 539, 540, 548, 551, 562, 563

Confirmatio 293, 324, 407, 408, 439, 456, 551, 552, 560, 689

## Confraternity

- Blessed Sacrament 119, 120, 129, 473, 669
- Corpus Christi 120, 413
- Holy Martyrs 473
- Most Holy Trinity and Charity 17, 216, 219-227
- St Angela 448-450, 473: v. Richaudeau
- St Ursula 266, 267, 482

## Congregation

- Bishops and Regulars 692
- Charity of Salò 224
- Consistorial 483
- Council 121, 474, 483
- Indulgences 431
- Religious 349
- Rites 19, 32, 33, 37, 40, 64, 250, 251, 411, 417, 425-434, 437, 438, 440, 442, 443, 455, 472, 481, 689, 690: v. APC; Process of beatification

Conservatorio S. Barbara: v. Ferrara Conservatory of St Cecilia: v. Rome Consigli e Ricordi 509 Constantinople 196

Contarini Antonio 198, 607, 615

- Gaspare XXIII

Conventuals 682

Converted: v. Luogo Pio Convertite

Coradellus Laurentius 672

Coradinis, Sebastianus de: v. Catharina; Paula

Corbello Francesco 45, 46

Corbie: v. St Colette

Coret Jacques 694

Corna Pellegrini Giacomo Maria 483

Cornaro, Cornelius, Corner Andrea 298, 337, 344, 612, 614

- Francesco 294, 298, 337, 532, 534, 551, 579, 606, 610, 646, 654, 662

Cornelius Flaminius: v. Corner

Corner Flaminio 195, 196

Corona: v. Rosary

Coronelli Vincenzo 695

Corpus Christi 186, 187, 189, 596, 604

Correr Piero 428

Corsetto Bartolomeo 303, 304

Corte Giovan Paolo dalla, della, de Curte 35, 357, 365, 367, 368, 369, 370, 387, 388, 665-667

Costituzioni della Compagnia 486

## Council

- Lateran IV 119
- Tours 168
- Trent XXI, XXVI, XXVII, XXVIII, XXIX, 9, 119, 121, 340, 380, 381, 401, 460, 479, 504, 505
- Vatican II 64

Council of Ten 143

Counsels: v. Ricordi

Cozalibus, Petrus de: v. Peregrina

Cozalus: v. Cozzano

Cozanis de, Cozzano, Bartholomeus, Bartolomeo 362, 659

Cozzando Leonardo 41

Cozzano, Cocialus, Cocianus, de Cocialibus, Cozalus Gabriel, Gabriele XVI, XVII, XXVI, 15, 19, 20, 23-27, 70, 126, 127, 145-148, 159-163, 175, 207, 215, 232, 239, 247, 248, 253, 255-258, 268-271, 286, 296, 310, 311, 312, 318-320, 323, 324, 329-332, 333, 337, 345-350, 355, 357, 365-371, 391-393, 435, 454-457, 465, 471-473, 479, 481, 526, 609, 618, 644, 648, 649, 653, 663, 664, 689

Cranach Lucas 278

Crema 35, 76, 177, 212, 214, 370, 666-668: v. Lucia

Episcopus Cremen. 691

- Humiliati 370

- San Marino 370, 666, 672

Cremona XX, XXIII, 9, 76, 114, 135-138, 143, 176, 177, 179, 214, 229-231, 240, 337, 522, 523, 524, 596-600, 604, 605, 657

Biblioteca Statale 480, 523

- Company 522, 523, 524

San Vittore 230, 596, 605

Vicar general 337

Cremonensis: v. Margarita

Crescent 185

Crescentius, Crescenzi Marcello 335

Crescimbene de Valtrompia: v. Margarita

Crete 187, 190

Crispo Tiberio 340, 341

Cristiani Léon 71

Cristoni Giovanni Maria 64, 407, 470-472, 479, 480, 481, 482, 484, 510, 512

Croiset 695

Crombach Hermann 265, 692, 693

Crusade 611, 655

Cypriana, Ioannis Mariae de Mortaris, de Mortarea, di Mortari 658, 660, 672

Cyprianus de Bornato: v. Maria

Cyprus 187, 192, 596

Cyriacus 266

Dallas 450

Dalola Francesco 408

Damasus a S. Alovsio 694

Damisella Marci Antoni de Cinaliis 275, 660

Dardellis, Marcus de: v. Lucia

Darfo 78, 79, 89

Darumano: v. Romano

Dassa Battista XV, 349, 486

Datary 338, 340, 342

Datio in solutum 35, 371, 374, 676-677

Daughters of Charity 207

- of Mary Immaculate 475-480, 485, 487

Daverio Giovanna 34

David 263, 619

David da Gussago 657

De Amicis Filippo 33

Deborah, Delbora 174, 593

Decamerone XXIII

Decentianum: v. Desenzano

Decreta et Ordo 410

Decretal Letter: v. Angela, canonization

Deffendo, Ginevra Luzzago household 679

Del Bono: v. Boni

Delbora: v. Deborah

Della Chiesa Giacomo 509, 510, 511, 513:

v. Benedict XV

Della Costa Jacopo 146, 147

Della Puglia Piero, Pietro 201, 204, 205, 607, 615

Della Rovere Francesco Maria 170, 172, 596, 607

Della Scala 338

Demesse: v. Dimesse

Denis the Carthusian 495, 522

Denmark: v. Christiana of

Dentella Lorenzo 22, 68

Derusiana Marci Antoni Cinaliae 275, 581

Desenzanis, de: v. Clara

Desenzano 3, 4, 5, 6, 75-78, 82, 86-89, 103, 107-109, 112, 118, 123-129, 413, 414, 421, 423, 427, 428, 431, 470

- Archives 4, 7, 19, 75, 85, 413, 582, 595, 603,

678-682, 693

- Archivio Antico Comunale 80, 85, 87, 123, 124

Brudazzo 127, 128, 232, 254

- Caser 88, 123, 134, 592

- Clergy 691

- Commune 4-6, 79, 81, 86, 96, 100, 124, 413, 414: v. Books of the Commune

Company of St Ursula 89, 414, 423, 678-680

- Grezze 75, 88, 92, 94, 103, 104, 108, 123

Lavagni 93, 94, 96, 97

- Machet, Machetto 75, 88, 92-94, 102-104, 125, 127, 423, 681, 682

Palazzo Todeschini 4

- Parish church 413, 414, 423, 680, 681

Via del Castello 88, 89

Devil 122, 123, 231, 320, 457, 536, 537, 544, 555, 558, 578, 584, 601, 603, 608, 620, 626-629, 632, 634

Devotio moderna 164

Dichiarazione 15, 27, 70, 127, 175, 215, 270, 271, 296, 311, 318, 330-333, 337, 345, 350, 391, 392, 417, 427, 435, 457, 526, 644-656, 689

Dictionarium Moreri 694

Dictionnaire de Spiritualité 119

Dictionnaire d'Histoire 337

Dijon 53, 692

Dimesse 46, 69, 70, 237, 321, 466, 520, 521,

522

Dinant 53

Dionisio Certosino: v. Denis the Carthusian

Directoire pour bien faire 694

Directorium 695

Discepolo Girolamo 427

Discipline 14, 129, 170, 584-587, 589

Disenzano: v. Desenzano

Divine Love, Divino Amore 16, 70, 119, 163, 184, 208, 209, 210, 216-219, 221-225

Dizionario biografico degli Italiani XIX

- degli Istituti di Perfezione 71

Documenti Fondazione Spedali 218, 227

Doge 187, 189, 212

Dolfin, Dolfina, Dolfini 193, 194, 596

Dolza Drusilla 270, 272, 648 Domigo Pietro 88, 123, 692

Dominica, Domenega, Domenica

- Antonii Gosii, de Gotiis 272, 581, 662, 663

de Casalibus de Homis 672

- de Cobiato 662, 664

della Pieve de Bon 658

de Mapheo di Remondini 658

- de plebe Abioni 672

- de Supraponte 658, 673

- de Zagi 657

- di Mascardi 657

- Dolci, Dolza 272

- Francisci de Gattis 581, 662, 663

- Francisci de Moschatis 660

- Iacobi de Plattis 681

Io. Antonii Veronensis 681

- Maphei (...) 660

- serva Maphei de Granettis 660

Dominicans 212, 372

Dominicus bombasarius: v. Margarita

Doneda Carlo 12, 13, 27, 41, 46, 48, 49, 50, 56, 57, 58-60, 85, 88, 101, 109, 115, 118, 124, 126, 148, 150, 151, 166, 173, 174, 192, 199, 202, 204, 206, 212, 214, 220, 235, 237, 238, 239, 241, 244, 250, 257-259, 269, 276, 322, 332, 333, 353, 354, 405, 408, 422, 455, 456, 499

Donesmondi Ippolito 321, 693

Doria Andrea 229

Dorosilla Zinelli 275

Dorosini Ippolita: v. Gallo Ippolita

Dro Domenico 370, 666, 668

Drusilla: v. Dorosilla Duccho Decio 313

Ducos 63

Dudon Paul 185, 192

Duhr J. 119

Duke of Candia: v. Minio Marco

Duke of Milan: v. Francesco Sforza Duke of Urbino: v. Della Rovere

Durand 381, 385

Durante Alessandro 391

- Aurelio 219, 325-327, 336-342, 343, 344, 345, 353, 362, 469, 552, 611-613, 647, 658

- Girolamo 338

- Paola 341

Vincenzo 340, 368

Duranti Durante 286, 338-342

- Pietro 338

Durazzo 194, 596

Dusina: v. Dusino

Dusino Andrea 332, 648

Easter 119, 122, 168, 172, 538, 546, 559, 600, 606

Ecstasy 166, 598

Ederle Guglielmo 338

Egypt 215

Eichstätt, Episcopus Eystetten. 691

Electio pro Confraternitate 34, 364, 662

Election of St Angela: v. Angela

Buzzi Veronica 29, 271, 275, 300, 307, 308, 309, 357, 360-365, 368, 371, 372, 373, 657-659

Chizzola Caterina 29, 352

 Luzzago Ginevra 352, 357, 363-366, 370, 666

- Porcellaga Bianca 352, 373, 386

- Prato Isabetta 29, 271, 273, 308, 350, 352, 391, 392

Elector of Bavaria 418: v. Ferdinand

Elisabeth, Elizabeth, Helisabet, Isabella, Isabetta

- Beltrami de Pacheris, Pachieris 299, 662, 663

- Beltrami fachere de Martinengo 299

de Capirolis, Capriolis 372, 658, 672

- de Casariis 660, 662, 663

de Stramazis 672

- di Franchi 658

- di Lonado 581

- Francisci Gorellae de Bornado 660

Iacobi de Forestis 660

of Schönau 265, 266

- serva Pauli de Federicis 660 Ember Days 168, 537, 546, 558

Emigli, Emili, Emilii XXIX, XXX

Emiliani Jerome XXIII, 180, 197, 198, 224

Emperor: v. Charles V

Empire XX, 143 Enchiridion XXIX Enciclopedia Bresciana 141 Enciclopedia Cattolica XIX Enclosure XVII, XXVIII, XXX, 160, 162, 233, 254, 257, 283, 319-321, 487, 491, 492, 618, 626, 629, 630, 635, 637, 638 Epiphany 168, 169, 537, 546, 658 Epistola Confortatoria 15, 23, 25, 27, 70, 126, 176, 268, 286, 318, 417, 427, 435, 617-626, Erasmus of Rotterdam XXIX, XXX Ermanni Ottavio: v. Hermanni Er-Ram: v. Rama Erskine Carlo 442, 443 Essen 262 Este: v. Alfonso II; Beatrice Estimo 6, 8, 84, 88, 123, 582 Estimo, Libri d': v. Catastico Estratto, Extract: v. Landini Francesco Établissement 420, 421 Ettore da Palazzolo 240 Eucharist: v. Holy Communion Europe 37, 51, 415, 416, 433, 444, 445, 447, 500, 504 Eustachio Cap. 413 Evandrophilactus 28, 381 Evenett H.O. XXI, XXII, XXVIII Executory processes: for Ginevra Luzzago 35, 357, 366, 370, 666

- others 217, 337, 343 Facconi Angelo 23, 78, 280, 281, 683, 688 - Francesco 23, 353, 354, 355 Fachere, Beltramus de Martinengo: v. Elisabeth Fachini Iacobus: v. Blancha Fahy C. XXX Faino, Fayno Bernardino 12-16, 30, 31, 49, 53, 54, 56-57, 59, 76, 89, 91, 92, 102-105, 108, 115, 123, 129, 132, 133, 150, 152-153, 172, 180, 199, 202, 204, 206, 209, 212, 215, 219, 220, 221, 225, 232, 234-239, 241, 246, 253, 258, 270-273, 277, 333, 335, 336, 343, 345, 361, 373, 386, 388, 418, 467-470, 585, 587-589, 612, 692 Faller Ansgario 24, 332 Farnese Alessandro 338: v. Paul III - Costanza 340, 341 - Ottavio 340 Fasting 113-116, 167, 168, 169, 305, 383, 384,

- for the Company: v. Bull of Paul III

396, 411, 412, 419, 420, 421, 462, 496, 537, 538, 545, 546, 558, 559 Father of the Company - general 29, 45, 56, 372, 389, 390, 393, 397, 470, 479 spiritual XVII, XXVII, 29, 372, 373, 382, 383, 386, 455, 464, 472, 540, 546, 549, 559,564 - substitute 56, 400, 402, 479, 481 - superior 29, 372, 387, 390, 401, 402 Fathers of Peace: v. Filippini Fathers of the Church 90, 113, 639 Faubourg St-Jacques 52, 53 Federation of the Companies 486 Federicis, Paulus de: v. Elisabeth Feliciani Porfirio 488 Feltre v. Bernardino da - Episcopus Feltren. 691 Fenaroli 150 Fenlon D. XXI Ferdinand, Ferdinant Maria of Bavaria 57, 246 Feroldo Hieronimo 149 Feroni card. 689 Ferrara 224, 409-411, 494-505 - Bishop 409 - Company 403, 494-505 Duchess of: v. Borgia Lucrezia National Art Gallery 499 St Barbara Conservatory 499 Ferrari Gaudenzio 213 Gerolamo 213 Maria Luisa 278, 279 Ferraris Lucius 695 Ferretti Giovan Pietro 31, 120, 121, 286, 323, 324, 337, 341, 344, 345, 407, 408, 552, 612, Ferrinus Philippus 583 Fides pro societate 35, 666 Fiesole: v. Giovanni da Filadelfio Benedetto da S. 445 Filetto Alvise 195, 193 Filippini 26, 45, 372, 373, 417: v. Oratorians Filippini Angela 437, 440 Fischettis, de: v. Anita Fiorentino: v. Gondi Fisogni Lucrezia 14 Fisogno 149 Flanders 15, 51, 53, 241

Flemish 193, 194

Fliche-Martin 71

Flora, Fiora 664

Fleury M. 695

 ancilla Hieronymi de Patengolis 135, 277, 581

- Comini de Castiono 660

- di Martino da Cazago 657

- Iacobini de Bertolis de Hemmo 664

- Mafei de Collibus 581

- Marcolini de Castiono 662

Ginevra Luzzago household 669
 Floramons Io. Petri de Calvisano 659

Florentia, Baptista de: v. Genebria

Flos de Orisis 672

Flumine Nigro, Paulus de: v. Petra

Fois Mario XXIX, 118 Foligno 335, 489, 490

- Cathedral 494

- Company 488-494

Fontana Barbara 238

 Io. Petrus, Giovan Pietro, Zan Piero 239, 274, 293, 579, 586, 588

- Giovanni 517

- Luca 695

- P. 695

Fontes Ambrosiani 49 Foresta Chaterina 669

Forestis, Iacobus de: v. Elisabeth

Forlì 224

Forti Caietanus 690

Fossati Luigi 66

France XX, 45, 51, 188, 241, 411, 412, 435, 450, 487, 500, 504

Franceschina da Locio 658

Francesco da Desenzano 61, 78-80, 83, 85, 87, 88, 328, 423, 425

- master 112

- II Sforza 176, 177, 178, 203, 204, 212, 214, 229, 230, 597, 599, 606

Franche-Comté 52

Franchi Angelo 23, 354

- v. Elisabeth

Franchi: v. Franks

Francis I 229

Francis Xavier: v. St Francis Xavier

Francis of Assisi: v. St Francis; Angela Franciscan tertiary; Third Order of St Francis

Francisca de Cesano 672

- de Grilis 672

- de Venetiis 672

- Francisci Merzadri 581

Franciscan tertiaries 682

Franciscans XXIII, 30, 118, 119, 121, 131, 136, 191, 196, 213, 233, 234, 244, 250, 281, 490,

521

Franco-Prussian War 450

Franks 260

Franzonibus, Christoforus de 97

Fraporta Marie Généreuse 51

Frassinetti Giuseppe 475, 476, 487

Frati del piombo 342

French 177, 229, 303

French Revolution 37, 407, 444

Friars Minor of St Francis 117, 118, 121, 250:

v. Observants

Frisinga, card. bishop of 690

Fruscatis de, Fruscadis de, Fruschate Daniel: v. Maria

Fuit tempore 263

Fulginatensis: v. Palladio

Fuligno: v. Foligno

Füssli Pietro 189

Gabiano, Petrus de: v. Martha

Gabriela Faustini Proletti 660

Gaeta Franco 367

Gaffurra, Gaffurri Andrea 273, 274

- Chiara 270, 273, 274, 648

- Taddea 273

Gaggia Giacinto 22, 68

Galeatiis, Augustinus Maphei de 671

Gallarati Ambrogio 521

Galli Pietro 447

Gallo

- Agostino di Giovan Cristoforo XV, 41, 90, 91, 93, 100, 112-118, 121, 122, 123, 128, 135, 136, 137, 139, 140, 143, 159, 160, 163, 166, 167, 169, 170, 174, 176, 178, 179, 181, 191, 192, 210, 213-215, 224, 229-232, 240, 241, 244, 267, 271, 598-601, 605, 606

- Angela Aurelia Ippolita 139

- Beatrice 139

- Cecilia Campanari-Gallo 139, 229, 599

Eugenia Isidora Iosepha 232

- Giovanni Cristoforo di Bontempo 139

Ippolita, Hippolita Gallo-Dorosini 139, 140,
 176, 215, 229-232, 598, 599, 605

- Mario 139

Galuzzi Alessandro 71

Galvano Franciscus Antonii, Giovan Francesco di Antonio 361, 362, 658, 659

Gambara XXVIII, 157: v. Tabulatiis

- Ippolita: v. Martinengo

- Laura 18, 152-154, 209, 225

Veronica XXV

Gandini Carl'Antonio 687
Gandino Bernardino 236
Garbottini Giuseppe 473
Garda XX, 3, 65, 75, 76
Gardone, Gardono Girolamo 243, 671

– Marcus de: v. Lucretia
Garginis, Bertolinus de: v. Bertolinus de Leno
Gargnani, de riperia: v. Ioanna
Gargnano, de: v. Antonia
Garioni: v. Bertolotti Garioni
Garza 457
Garzetta 210, 219, 220
Gaspar Rizzinus de Gardono Riperiae 616

Gatio, Betinus de 93 Gattis, Ioannes de: v. Catharina - Franciscus de: v. Dominica

Gatusi, di: v. Catharina

Gaul 261

Gavardis de, Gavardo

Aloysio 307Antonio 240Catharina 240

- Hieronymus, Girolamo 307, 580

Lucia 307Margarita 307Stefano 240

- Tomaso 144, 223, 240, 277, 598, 608

 Ursula, Orsola, Orsolina, Ursina 307, 309, 327, 359, 361, 364, 574, 580, 658, 661

Gavazzi Vittoria 141
Gedi, da: v. Catharina
Gedoni Dominicus 93, 591
Gelasius, pope 654
Gelenio Egidio 51, 693
Genebria Zenebria Bantistae de Florent

Genebria, Zenebria, Baptistae de Florentia 660 - v. Luzzago

Geneva XXIII Gennault Jean-François 693 Genoa 216, 217, 229

conservatory and monastery of Sant'Andrea 216

monastery delle Grazie 216

Gentile Agostino 343, 362, 387, 388, 391-393, 615, 658, 659

- Giacomo Filippo 476, 477

Georgetown 450 Geoures, card. di 690 Germans 262

Germany 119, 200, 241, 263

Gerolamo da Romano: v. Romanino

Gerson 119

Gerusalemme, Gierusalem: v. Jerusalem

Gethsemane 463 Ghedi 137, 194 Gheldica 15 Ghitti Pompeo 687

Giacomo da Salò 46

Gian Pietro Fontana: v. Fontana

Giberti Gian Matteo 338

Giesa: v. Church Ginevra: v. Luzzago. Gioanne fornaro: v. Maria Giolito Giovanni 495 Giorgio Marino: v. Zorzi Giovanna: v. Ioanna

Giovanni da Fiesole 125

Giovanni di Martino da Bovegno 293

Giovanni Maria, Ginevra Luzzago household 669

Giovita, Iovitta, di Cipriano da Rezzato 293, 579

Girardettis de, Girardetti, Hieronymus, Girolamo di Bernardino 312, 365, 663

Girardo de boschi alti: v. Boscoli

Girelli Elena 474

- Elisabetta XVII, 451, 473-475, 477-481

 Maddalena XVII, 451, 474, 475, 477-481, 510, 511, 512, 513

Giroldi Stefano 391

Gisonelli Matheus: v. Iacobina; Petra

Gissey, Odo de 52, 692 Giuda 619, 620, 635 Giuda, tribù di 645

Giuliano, Ziliano: v. Lombardi Giuliano

Giussano, Gabriel de: v. Iulia

Giustina: v. Candida

Giustinian, Giustiniani, Alvise di Marino, Alovigio 189, 190

- Andrea 190

- Anzolo di Alvise 190

- Benedetto 489

- Gerolamo Ascanio 428

- Marin 190

Paolo XX, XXIII

Giustiniani Vincenzo 468, 471

Gloire de Ste Ursule (La) 54, 206, 693, 694

Gloria Patri 645 Gnaga Arnaldo 157 Golden Legend 90, 266

Gondi Ottavio, Octavio 47-52, 54-59, 85, 91, 92, 102, 108, 115, 125, 170, 173, 180, 202, 203, 204, 211, 212, 239, 241, 243, 255, 321,

388, 409, 411, 418, 423, 434, 466, 481, 692 Gondio Fiorentino: v. Gondi Gonzaga di Castiglione 174, 230

- Agnese 211

Alovigio, Alovisio, Luigi Alessandro 172, 173, 211, 596, 604

- Angela 173

- Caterina d'Anguisola 172, 596, 604

Elisabetta 134Ferdinando 173

- Francesco 321

- Gian Francesco 212

- Gian Francesco 21 - Giulia XXV

- Luigi III 172

- Nicola 211

- Rodolfo 172

Good Friday 241

Gorella Franciscus de Bornado: v. Elisabeth Gosii, Gotiis, Antonius de: v. Catharina; Dominica

Gospel 161, 165, 425, 534, 538, 541, 550, 566, 570, 598, 626, 679, 682, 684, 686

Gotalengo, Gottolengo, Ottalengo 135, 157, 595, 597

Governo Archiepiscopale 505, 519 Governors: v. Lady-governors; Men

Grand Chancellor of Candia: v. Filetto Alvise

Grand Turk: v. Suleiman

Grande Illustrazione 62

Granettis, Mapheus de: v. Dominica Grasso Caprioli Francesco 139, 306

Grata, Grada Lucretia 588, 589

Gratiosa Andreae de Manganis, del Mangano 365, 657, 660, 662

Baptistae de Spalenzis 581

Great Britain 450 Greef, Patrick de 53

Gregoria 261 Gregory I 570, 669

- X 500

- XIII 39, 346-348, 502-504, 507, 518, 519

- XIV 489

Grezze: v. Desenzano

Grilis, de: v. Francisca; Victoria

Grisante, Don 386

Grisi, di: v. Paula

Grisoni Annibale 337, 343

Gromi Gio. Battista 470

Grossis, Christophorus de: v. Catharina

Grossus, Grossi Bernardino, Bernardino di Cristoforo 145, 277, 355, 581: v. Catharina

Grumello Antonio 177

Guelfi Antonio 19

Guereris, Luca de: v. Sanctina

Guerrini Paolo XV, XX, XXIX, XXX, 21, 22, 27, 28, 59, 60, 62, 63, 65-69, 79, 80, 86, 88, 89, 128, 140, 142, 143, 145, 146, 151, 154, 155, 219, 224, 235, 338, 340, 368, 457, 475, 477, 482, 485, 491

Gueudré Marie de Chantal 409, 444, 500, 504

Guidotti Ioanna 94

Gusmini Giorgio 513

Gussago Germano Jacopo 62, 63

Guttulengum: v. Gottolengo

Habit XV, XXVIII, 117, 121, 122, 195, 235, 236, 249, 250, 279, 281, 283, 323, 333, 388, 395, 398, 399, 436, 456, 458, 462, 509-510, 515, 536, 537, 545, 556, 557, 654

Hagen Philippe 189

Hair-shirt 14, 129, 170, 584, 585, 587, 589

Hast: v. Asti

Hasta, de: v. Antonia

Haute Saône 503

Héliot P. 692, 695

Helisabeth: v. Elisabeth

Hemmo: v. Flora

Hermanni Ottavio 305, 409

Hermannus Joseph 265

Hermits of St Augustine 132, 177

Herrera, Thoma de 693 Hierarchia Catholica 334

Hieremia Vincenzo: v. Maria

Hieronyma di Iora 657

Hieronymus aurifex: v. Margarita

Hierusalem, Hierusaleme: v. Jerusalem

Hisabetta: v. Elisabeth

Histoire de l'Ordre de Ste-Ursule 429, 433

Histoire des Ordres 695

Histoire du Clergé 695

Historia Capucina: v. Monumenta Historica

Historia Sanctae Ursulae 261, 263

Holofernes 536, 544, 555

Holy Communion, Eucharist XXI, 115, 116, 118-121, 170, 276, 294, 352, 385, 395, 396, 411, 420, 431, 432, 496, 522, 540, 548, 551, 552, 599, 603, 607

Holy Father 476, 511

Holy Land XX, 138, 172, 183-188, 189, 191, 201, 206, 213, 215, 234, 263, 276, 596, 604,

605

Holy Office 469

Holy Places 184, 191, 213 Holy See 33, 117, 180, 329, 331, 332, 336, 368, 379, 408, 410, 414, 419, 420, 427, 447, 493, 500, 645 Holy Sepulchre 185

Holy Shroud 134

686, 689

Holy Spirit XVII, XXII, XXIII, XXVI, XXVII, 117, 126, 160, 161, 169, 176, 178, 215, 232, 269, 270, 281, 282, 287, 290, 303, 332, 333, 359, 382, 384, 387, 388, 445, 453, 457, 464, 465, 470, 471, 475, 479, 522, 526, 533, 534, 538, 540, 546, 547, 549, 560, 569, 573, 574, 577, 579, 580, 610, 621-623, 625, 631, 635, 637-645, 648, 651, 654, 678, 685,

Holy Week 226 Holy Year 199-202 Homis, de: v. Annuntiata; Dominica Honoria Marcolini de Castiono 581, 662, 664 Hope Charles 279 Horatio 653

Hospitals: v. Ospedale, Ospedali Houses of Piety and Charity: v. Luoghi Pii Humiliati 35, 370 Hungary 200, 690 Huns 260, 264 Huy 53

Iacobilli Ludovico 693, 694 Iacobina

- Ioannis de Collibus, de Colibus 660, 662, 663
- Mathei Gisonelli 660
- Mathei de Tabernolis 581

Iconography 79, 104, 126, 127, 178, 188, 204, 210, 220, 235, 237, 245-247, 250, 267, 277, 278-281, 414, 416, 421, 424, 430, 435, 590, 678-688

Iesuppina Anna: v. Usupini Ignatius of Loyola 90, 120, 186, 192, 346 Ilarino da Milano 49 Imericis: v. Merici Imericus in Quadra Citadellae 80 Imitation of Christ 90

Immaculate Conception 475, 584: v. Daughters of Mary Immaculate; Mary Immaculate Imola 224

Incognito 139

Incurables: v. Ospedale, Ospedali Index Diversorum 30, 31, 153

Indulgences 183, 187, 199-201, 218, 222, 226,

319, 325-327, 329, 346, 409, 416, 430-432, 446, 467, 501, 506, 511, 513, 525, 551, 552, 611, 631, 633, 634, 640, 641, 654, 656 Indultum pro moniali 30, 117, 233, 244

Infanta of Spain 449 Innocent XI 421

Innocentia, Nocenta

 de Brixianis 672 Ioanini de Pezis 581

Inquisition XXIX

In solutum datio 34, 147, 363

Introinis, Tomasinus de 98 Inventario Registri 242

Ioanettis, Iovanettis, Antonius de: v. Catharina Ioanna, Giovanna, Iohana:

- Antonii de Nozia 660

Bartolomei de Bertellis 660

- da Riviera 658

de riperia Gargnani 581

de Salodio 672

Maria de Casariis 660

Martini de Valtrompia 660

- uxor Guidotti: v. Guidotti

Ioannes Antonius 94, 96

Iora, di: v. Hieronyma

Iorci: v. Orzi

Iotellis, Antonius Betini de 659

Isabella di Monica Patengola 132, 133

Isabetta: v. Elisabeth

Isepino: v. Usupino Isibaldis: v. Sibaldis

Isipinis, de: v. Antonia; Barbara; Laura; Theodora; Usupini

Isola dei Frati 110, 118

Isola di Garda 118

Israel 174

Istria 195

Istruzione 250, 417, 422

Italy XXI, XXII, 119, 188, 199, 200, 204, 216, 229, 412, 422, 448

Iudea: v. Judea

Iulia, Giulia

Apolonii de Bozolis, Bozonis 660, 662, 663

de Besenzanis 672

Gabriellis de Giussano 581

- Natalis de Zabellis 272, 662, 663, 670

Vincentii de Chazalochis 581

Iulianus, ser 665

Iustificationi: v. Processo Nazari

Iustiniano: v. Giustinian, Giustiniano

Jacopo da Voragine 90, 266 Jaffa 186, 192 Jansen 52 Jeanne de Jésus 53 Jégou Marie-Andrée Jerusalem 183-184, 191-195, 198, 199, 201, 205, 210, 213, 593, 596, 597, 599, 605, 619, Jesuits 48, 387, 388, 416, 487 lob 639 Joshua: v. Josuè Josuè 635 Journal des Illustres 411 Jubilee 187, 199-201 Judah: v. Giuda Judea 192 Judith 536, 544, 555 Julius II 120 Justificationi: v. Processo Nazari

Katterbach, Bruno 31, 334 King of Tunis 190 Kithara: v. Cerigo Klagenfurt 692 Knights of Rhodes 186 Kress 278 Kulturkampf 450

Labbetius Iacobus 694

Lactantia Philippi maringoni 581

Lady governors 16, 41, 145, 152, 165, 169, 240, 284, 289, 291, 293, 295, 298, 303, 311, 313, 327, 336, 348, 360, 363, 367, 369, 371, 372, 373, 374, 375, 376, 388, 389, 391, 392, 393, 398, 400, 404, 408, 467, 517, 523, 536, 537, 538, 540, 544-546, 549, 551, 552, 556, 558, 559, 564, 588, 589, 602, 603, 610

Lanciano 188, 596, 604

Landini Francesco 38, 39, 40, 66, 70, 92, 124, 125, 166, 174, 191, 192, 203, 232, 238, 257, 258, 320, 321, 325, 328, 329, 353, 372, 373, 400, 408, 439, 496, 502, 503, 514, 517, 518, 532, 593

Landshout: v. Landshut

Landshut 51, 55, 57

Langerini, bishop 691
Lanzano: v. Lanciano
Laploncio Richetta Stefano 693
Lateran 8
- Canons of: v. Canons
Laudes 674

Laura, Lavora 270, 648

- Angeli, Anzoli Cinaliae, Cinaleis 272, 660

- Angeli de Cayno 272, 581

- de Isipinis 272, 672

- de Panzoliis 672

- de Pescheriis, Pischeriis 272, 273, 672

Lavagni: v. Desenzano

Ledóchowska Teresa XV, XVI, XVIII, 21, 22, 27, 44, 57, 70-72, 145, 174, 175, 208-209, 214, 221, 222, 223, 238, 262, 271, 285, 293, 334, 340, 344, 393, 397, 463, 464, 486

Legacies: v. Testamento

Legal representative 21, 135, 292, 293, 360

Leges Brixianae 146

Leno 157: v. Bertolinus; Lucretia; Maria; Scholastica

Lent 90, 114-116, 122, 197, 413, 490, 537, 546, 558, 606

Leo I 654

- X 17, 30, 211, 217, 218

- XIII 484

Leonardo da Porto Maurizio 63

Leone di Giuda 645

Leone Paolo 403, 494, 499

Leonini Antonius Petri Iacobi 663

Lequille Didacus 694 Lerma, J.M. de 690

Lesage Germain 504

Lesina 194

Levison Wilhelm 262

Liber orationum 695

Library: v. Biblioteca

Libri, libro, books 4, 143

- Commune Brescia XV, 9-11, 136, 142, 219

Commune Desenzano XV, 4-6, 79, 80, 81, 83, 92-98, 123, 124, 413, 414

Commune Salò 8, 83, 103

 degli Ospedali e dei Luoghi Pii 16-18, 219, 220, 224, 227

Libri, libro, books of the Company 27-29, 220, 274, 350

- autentico: v. Libro bollato

- bollato 72, 285, 308, 309, 325, 326-328, 351, 353, 362, 391, 458, 545, 556, 593

- Capitularium: v. Primo Libro Generale

- dei Conti 22, 41, 353, 354

- della Beata: v. Libro della Reverenda

della Busta: v. Libro della Reverenda

- della Compagnia (defunte) 352, 353

- della Reverenda 15, 42, 238, 354, 373, 386, 388, 408, 590

- della Vita: v. Libro della Reverenda

- delle elemosine e spese 424, 425

- Libretto: v. Libro Primo della Compagnia

- Libro delle Defunte 242, 299

- ordinario: v. Primo Libro Generale

- Primo degli atti più antichi: v. Libro bollato

- Primo degli atti pubblici 353, 355

 Primo della Compagnia 242, 270, 273, 276, 351-353

- Primo Libro Generale 350, 351, 352, 355, 356, 358, 364, 371, 660

 Registro di tutti gli Instrumenti 145, 351, 355

- Rosso: v. Libro della Reverenda

Secondo Libro Generale 22, 24, 28-31, 40, 56, 67, 70, 71, 124, 141-142, 144, 155, 198, 249, 253, 271, 275, 285, 293, 300, 301, 304, 308, 311, 312, 313, 326, 341, 345, 350, 351, 357, 360, 361, 365, 371-374, 378, 389, 390, 391-394, 396, 397, 398, 408, 485, 486, 491, 496, 520

- sigillato: v. Libro bollato

- Terzo Libro Generale 29, 356, 424, 425

Liège 51-53, 411, 692

Lille 53

Lippomano Luigi 338,

- Pietro 325, 336, 338, 469, 611, 647

Lipsius R.A. 385

Literae Decretales 446: v. Angela, canonization

Litta Pompeo 173

Little Office book: v. Office of Our Lady

Llaul Mathia 694

Locadellis, Cyprianus de: v. Sancta

Locio: v. Franceschina

Lodi 76, 214

v. Calisto da; Tomasino da

Lodoviga 657

Lodrini, abbot 27

Lodrone 584

- Ettore 303

Lucrezia 145, 146, 147, 155, 247, 293, 303, 304, 306-307, 317, 322-327, 329, 331, 345, 345, 355, 356, 357-361, 363, 386, 387, 391, 552, 574, 580, 593, 613, 614, 616, 659-661

- Pietro 303

Lombardi Girolamo 26, 27, 30, 33, 51, 52, 57-63, 70, 78, 79, 83, 84, 87, 89, 92, 101-104, 115, 129, 172, 173, 192, 199, 207, 208, 212, 213, 214, 233, 241, 246, 269, 285, 321-325, 328, 332, 333, 351-355, 391, 416, 438

- Roberto 220

Ziliano, Giuliano, Iulianus 365-367, 374
 Lombardis, Iulianus de: v. Lombardi

Lombardy 14, 49, 75, 267, 524, 696 Lonado, de: v. Elisabeth; Panicis

London

- British Museum 19, 21, 28

- Royal Academy of Arts 279

Longhi 279

Longo Giovanni 524

Loreto 224

Loridan J. 415

Loth 534

Lothis, Bernardus de: v. Antonia

Louis XV 427, 690

Louisiana 416

Lourdes 475

Louvain 52

- University 416

Low Countries 52

Łubieńska Cecylja XV, 12, 22, 27, 28, 38, 66-68, 70, 89, 485

Lucenti Ambrogio 695

Luchini Annetta 477, 482, 483

- Vincentius 696

Lucia, Lutia

de Venetiis 672

Marci de Bombellis 660

Marci de Dardellis de Crema 681

- Mathei de Notariis 660

Lucifer 645

Lucretia

Baptistae aurificis 582

- Bertolini de Garginis 275, 300, 660

- Betini de Vaylate 660

- cremonesa: v. Margarita

- da Leno 300, 301, 658

detta Menica, Ginevra Luzzago household
 669

Gasparini Mayaculae 581

Marci de Gardono 660

Ludovica de Vailate 673

Ludovico il Moro 177, 212

Luigi Maria da Roma 250

Luisa di S. Giuseppe: v. Schiantarelli

Luoghi Pii, Luogo Pio XVI, 16, 17, 136, 140, 143, 174, 175, 184, 197, 198, 201, 202-204, 205, 206, 208, 209, 210, 221, 223, 224, 395, 396, 495, 496, 505, 597, 604, 605

- della Carità 18, 152, 153, 155, 220, 225, 235

- della Pietà 18, 220, 221, 373

delle Cittelle 221

 delle Convertite della Carità: v. Luogo Pio della Carità

Luther Martin 200 Lutheranism XXI, 200

Luzzago, Luzago, Luciagi 49, 149, 255

- Alessandro 48, 49, 243, 305, 409, 580, 668
- Alessandro di Girolamo, Ven. 305, 588, 693
- Antonio 304
- Ercole 309
- Galeazzo 309
- Ginevra, Genebria, Zenebria 34, 35, 48, 147, 155, 242, 243, 272, 297, 299-300, 305, 312, 323, 324, 326, 330, 352, 357, 358, 359, 361, 363-371, 373, 386, 574, 582, 588, 644, 646, 648, 661-663, 665-667, 671, 672
- Hieronymo 305, 312, 313, 363, 365, 371, 374, 663, 668-673
- Ippolita 671
- Lucia 370, 669
- Lucretia, Lucrezia 277, 309, 580
- Maria 670
- Paola Luzzago-Soraga 306, 669, 670
- Paolo 309, 580
- Tomaso 305, 670
- Veronica 588
- Zoan 309

Luzzari Maurizio 372, 373, 386

Luzzi 381 Lyons 347

- Episcopus Lugdun. 691

Lyre Adriano 693

Mabellini Agostino 104 Macca Valentino 286 Maccagno Angela 475 Machet, Machetto: v. Desenzano

Madonna: v. Virgin Mary

Madonna del Rio 109
Madonne: v. Matrons

Madre della Compagnia: v. Mother general

Maestre: v. Mistresses

Mafeus camparius, Maffeo 95, 96

Maffei of Brescia 278 Maffetti: v. Maphettis

Maffetti Gio. Maria 34

Magdalena

de Miliis 673de Paschis 672

Maggi Vincenzo XXX

Magi 215

Magna, Paolo della 669

Magnaguti Alessandro 211

Maguzzano 127, 128

Maiineris, Galeatius, Galiatius, de: v. Margarita Mainacia Hieronymus, Girolamo 377, 617

Mainz 381

Maioli Arico 95

- Giovanni 94

Malazistis, Monacha de: v. Annuntiata; Medea

Malgarotti Andrea 235

- Isabella 235

Malines 52

- Archives of the Cathedral 53

- St-Rombaut 53

Malvezzi Lelia 77, 328, 423, 424

Mamolo 92

Mandatum Societatis 34, 358, 659-661

Manerba 86

Manerba Scipione 313

Manerbio 136

Mangan, Manganis, Andrea del, de: v. Catharina; Gratiosa

- Antonia del: v. Martha

Mans: v. Mons

Mantoa: v. Mantua

Mantovano 76

Mantua, Mantova 76, 172, 183, 184, 211, 212, 224, 321, 596, 604

- San Domenico 211

Manuel de l'Archiconfrérie 448, 449

Maphettis, Maffetti Io. Maria de, Giovan Maria 304, 356, 358, 659, 661

Mapheus (...): v. Dominica

Mar Rosso 45

Marcelli Michelangelo 489, 491

Marchetti Pietro Maria 20, 48, 50, 335, 401,

461, 462, 466, 532

Marchina: v. Annibale

Marcocchi Massimo XV-XVIII, 523

Marcolino: v. Flora; Honoria

Marengoni, Marenzoni Stephanus: v. Ursula

Margarita of Austria 14

Margarita, Margaritta 270

- maid servant of Veronica Buzzi 658
- Betini del Rima, colonella 371, 660, 672
- Betini Rivae 581
- Christophori de Bonis 662, 663
- colonella of S. Afra 275, 300, 658, 659
- Cremonensis 672
- Crescimbeni de Sibaldis de Valtrumpia, Cresimbeni de Sibaldis de Bovegno, de Isibaldis de Valtrumpia 581, 662, 664

- Cresimbeni de Valtrompia 660

- de Brixia 275, 298, 680

- de Lucretia cremonesa 658

- de S. Xaverio 694

- de Vertua 672

 di Sopraponte, ancilla Thomae de Gavardo 240, 581

- di Tonoli 658

- Dominici bombasarii 660

Francisci de Bonellis 660

- Galeatii de Maiineris 662, 663

- Hieronymi aurificis 581

- Ioannis Iacobi de Pellettis 662

- Maria dell'Olmo 275

Margnaga, Bartolomeus de: v. Catharina Maria 270

- alumna Barbarae Sfortiae 368, 664

- ancilla Mariae de Advocatis 581

- Antonii de Barcho 660

Baptistae de Spalentiis, Spalenzis 581, 660, 662, 663

- Bertoletti 275

- Bertolini de Garginis 660

- Bertolini de Leno, colonella 275, 277, 300, 301, 371, 581, 658, 659, 672

- Camilli de Spadariis 660

- Cipriani de Bornado 660

 Danielis de Fruscatis, Fruschate, Fruscadis 277, 581, 660, 662, 663

- de Castiono 660

 de Pedrochis, de Pedrochis Piceni, Pedroche Francisci 581, 660, 672

- de Zenuchinis 672

- de Zuan di Scalvo 657

- di Gioanne fornaro 658

 di Martinelli, de Martinellis 372, 657, 660, 673

- Francisci de Navis 581

 Ioanini, Iovanini, de Sibaldis, de Isibaldis de Valtrompia 581, 662, 664

- Luigia di S. Giuseppe: v. Schiantarelli

- sister of Bartholomeo Cantarane 658

- SSma.: v. Virgin Mary

- Vincenzo Hieremia household 658

 wet-nurse in household of Ginevra Luzzago 669

Maria Theresa of Austria 427, 690

Mariani Luciana XV, 24, 486

Marie de Saxe 449

Marietta sta alli Miracoli 658

Maringoni, de cararia: v. Ursula Defendi

Maringonus Philippus: v. Lactantia; Ursula

Marino Giorgio: v. Zorzi

Mariscotti Giacinta: v. S. Giacinta

Marolinus 94

Marsico 335

Martha, Marta 261

- ancilla Antoniae del Mangan 581

- Antonii barberii 581

- Christophori de Polinis, Polani 581, 660

- de Aratoribus, di Aradori 658, 672

- de Capirolis, Caprioli 658, 672

- de Castiono 672

- de Paterno 672

- della Pizza 299, 352, 353

- di Buzzi 658, 660, 672

- Io. Petri de Pilottis de Savallo 581

- Jo. Francisci de Monticellis 581, 660, 662

- neptis Antonii de Pezis 299, 581

- Pecini de Travayado 581

- Petri de Gabiano 581

- serva Samaritanae de Capirolis 660

 sister of Pavola in the chancellor's house at the Major Hospital 658

Martin Marie de St-Jean 22, 486

Martineau Jane 279

Martinellis, de: v. Maria

Martinengo 152: v. Clara; Elisabeth

Martinengo Barbara 171

- Cesare il Magnifico 274

- Clara 274

- Francesco 170, 596

- Francesco bechar 171

- Francesco della Motella 171

- Ioanna 172

Ippolita 274

- Leonardo 153

- Maddalena 171

- Vincenzo 172

- Zoan Francesco 171

- Zoan Francesco di Hieronimo 171

Martinique 416

Martinoni, di: v. Blancha

- Edoardo 88

Martinus testor 93

Martyrs 90, 160, 162, 184, 200, 261, 416, 444, 608, 656

Ursulines of Orange 444

- Ursulines of Valenciennes 444

Mary Immaculate 473, 475, 482-484

Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi: v. Pazzi

Mary of the Incarnation 412

Mascardi, di: v. Dominica Masetti Zannini Antonio XXI, 4 - Gian Ludovico 144

Masini Paolo 693

Masotti Arnaldo 113

Mass 118, 120, 122, 163, 242, 243, 267, 285, 306, 383, 395, 396, 421, 432, 439, 442, 443, 447, 496, 516, 539, 547, 562

Massarelli Angelo 340 Massariis, Ciprianus de 673 Massini Carlo 206

Mastellone 213

Matia Belentano: v. Bellintani

Matrons, Madonne XVI, 29, 154, 165, 225, 284, 289, 290, 291, 292, 293, 294, 295, 296, 297, 298, 299, 300, 301-310, 313, 318, 319, 326, 359-360, 363, 364, 365, 367, 371, 373, 381, 382, 389, 390, 392-397, 400-402, 404, 517, 541, 542, 550, 566, 567, 570, 571, 579, 580, 593, 603, 606, 608, 626, 644, 658, 659, 662, 689

Matteo da Bascio XXIII Mattia da Salò: v. Bellintani Mattutino, Matines 538, 547, 560, 674

Maurice of Savoy 489

Mauris, Marcus Antonius de 312, 365, 663

Mayacula Gasparinus: v. Lucretia

Mayhaus de Cormons, Pauline de 449

Mazan, Sybille de 500-502

Mazola Mapheus 659

Mazzoldi Leonardo 34 Mazzuchelli Giammaria 139, 232

Mazzuoli Giuseppe: v. Bastarolo

M.D.P.U.: v. Pommereu

Meda, Fratelli da 39

Medea in domo Monache de Malazistis 581

Mei, Meya Bernardino 309

- Caterina 309, 327, 574

Melchiore a Pobladura 45

Melchiori Giovan Battista 4

Mella 457

Members of the Company: v. Colonella; Company, virgins

Mémoires chronologiques 695

Memorie antiche 198

Memorie manoscritte 78 Memorie Storiche 22, 69

Memphis 277

Men XVI, 292, 294, 310, 311, 312-313, 397, 542, 550, 566, 567, 579, 580, 653, 671-673

- agents 147, 292, 310-313, 327, 351, 355, 356,

360, 364, 365, 366, 369, 371, 389, 390, 397, 459, 542, 550, 662, 663, 668

chancellor XXVI, 19, 23, 25, 147, 148, 256, 310, 312, 318, 323, 333, 350, 353, 397, 471, 613, 653

conservators and executors 325, 326, 334, 336-342, 343, 345, 351, 353, 362, 366, 368, 370, 377, 391, 392, 400, 456, 469, 552, 611-616, 646, 647, 656, 658

governors 147, 310-313, 327, 336, 348, 351, 360, 366, 369, 370, 374, 389, 390, 397, 517, 536, 540, 542, 544, 549, 556, 564, 589, 610, 611, 612-615, 626, 628, 638, 644, 648-650, 652, 655, 656

- procurators 147, 271, 272, 296, 300, 304, 311, 312, 359, 364

- protectors 140, 142, 144, 147, 148, 296, 310-313, 333, 351, 360, 364-366, 369, 371, 391

Mende 381

Mendicant Orders XX

Mercanda Tomaso 143

Mercurio, Marie di 64, 429

Merici, Mericho, Merigi, Meris, Merizi 5, 75-90, 94-97, 591, 603

- Angela: v. Angela

- Antonio de Imerigho da Prandaglio 79

 Antonio fu Giovanni de Imericis da Prandaglio

- Bertolinus Imerici in Nibolento 80, 81

- Carolus 5, 81, 85-87

- Caterina 5, 8, 84, 92, 95-98, 101, 102

- family 4-6, 77-90, 92, 94-99

- Gio. Angelo, son of Gio. Battista 79

- Gio. Antonio, son of Gio. Battista 79

- Gio. Antonio, son of Merico 79

- Gio. Battista, son of Merico 79

- Gio. Maria, son of Gio. Battista 79

- Gio. Maria, son of Gio. Merici 79, 124

Giovanni, Zuan de Merigo, de Merico, Johannes 4, 5, 6, 78, 79, 82, 85-90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 101, 102, 107, 266

- Imericus in Nibolento 80

- Imericus in Quadra Citadellae 80

- Johannes, Zuan de Merigo 124

- Lodovico, son of Gio. Battista 79

- Lodovico, son of Gio. Merici 79

- Merico, son of Gio. Battista 78

- Merico, son of Gio. Merici 79

- Quinto, son of Gio. Battista 79

- Tomaso 243, 582

- Zaninus (Giovannino) Aymerici in Bassano 80

Merigi: v. Merici Meris: v. Merici Merizi: v. Merici Merlo Giovanni Battista 427 Merzadris, Antonius de: v. Catharina Merzadrus Franciscus: v. Francisca Metz René 381, 384, 385 Mey, Meya: v. Mei Middle Ages 262, 265 Middle East 186, 188 Mignani Laura XXV, 69, 134 Milan, Milano XVIII, XX, XXIII, XXVIII, 76, 177-179, 202-204, 213, 214, 230, 320, 494, 505, 513-519, 597, 599, 602: v. Barbara Sforza - Archives State 4, 19, 35, 242 - Archivio Storico Diocesano 19, 39, 387, 399, 400, 404, 461, 514 Biblioteca Ambrosiana 19 Biblioteca Trivulziana XVIII, XX, XXIII, XXVIII, 19, 20 - Cardinal archbishop 690 Castle 178 - Cathedral 119 - Company of St Ursula 285, 346, 348, 387, 388, 500-502, 504, 513-519 Porta Ticinese 178 Milenensis episcopus: v. Ferretti Miletopolitanus Episcopus 691 Miliis, de: v. Magdalena Milioli, di: v. Annuntiata Mincinis, Andrea Ambrosii de 666 Mingotti Giovanni Battista 436 Minio Francesco 193 Marco 193 Miracles 408, 429, 434, 437, 438, 439, 440, 441, 442, 443, 446 Missale Passaviense 267 Mistresses 29, 273, 295, 301, 313, 381, 388, 389, 390, 391, 392-395, 397-398, 401, 403, 496, 542, 550, 653 Modena, Modona 525: v. Tommaso da - Company 525, 526 Moisè: v. Moses Molinari Franco 41, 401, 460 Molino Giovanni 249, 250, 432, 691 Molis, de: v. Moris

- O.S.U. 409, 411, 416, 418-420, 430, 447, 491 Money 58, 88 Mons 14, 53, 54 Montanari D. XXI Montanini Francesco 433 Monte, Francesco de 424 - Zorzo 88, 123, 592 Montebello Vicentino 188 Montecatino Antonio 490 Monteclaro: v. Barbara Monti - Cristoforo 308 della Corte 308 de Montibus, Gian Girolamo, Hieronymus q. Thadaei 292, 427, 581 di Bologna 51 - Francesco 245, 247, 280, 281 - Giovanna 308, 326, 574 Zoan Battista di Cristoforo 308 Monticellis, Io. Franciscus de: v. Catharina; Martha Montichiari: v. Barbara Montjoux Francesca 416 Monumenta Historica 45-49, 490 Monumenta Ignatiana 346 Mora Francesco 441 Morassi Antonio 246, 247 Morenas M. 695 Moretto 245-247, 267, 279, 282, 373 Morganti de Bornado: v. Simona Moris, Molis, Moli, Antonius Matheus de 365-367, 369, 374, 665, 672 Mornese 475 Moroni Gaetano 168, 188, 200, 335 Morosini Marco 589 Morosis Alovisius de, Moroso Aloviso 83, 84 Mortarea, Io. Maria de: v. Cypriana Mortari, de: v. Cypriana Moschatis, Franciscus de: v. Dominica Moses 623, 634, 635 Moslems 192 Mosto, Bartolomeo da 195 Francesco da 195 Mother general, principal 29, 45, 46, 48, 59, 77, 141, 142, 147, 155, 271, 296, 299, 300, 306, 307, 308, 309, 310, 313, 317, 322, 323, 327, 350, 358-363, 373, 374, 378, 387, 388, 389, 390, 391, 393, 397, 399, 400, 404, 423, 424, 460, 481, 517, 588, 653, 663, 665, 691 Mount Sion, nuns and friars 191

494, 502, 507, 514: v. Enclosure

Molmenti Pompeo 110 Monasteriensis Arturio 694

Monasteries XV, XVII, XXIX, 51, 162, 254,

255, 256, 257, 319, 320, 321, 322, 324, 347,

348, 378, 401, 409, 423, 432, 453, 461, 465,

Müller Giuseppe 177 Muzio, Muzzio, Mucio Laurentius, Lorenzo 26, 278, 293, 294, 297, 332, 456, 551, 552, 579, 610, 631, 633, 648, 651, 662

Nantes, Episcopus Nanneten. 691 Naples 63, 524, 525 - Company 524 Napoleon XVII

Napoleonic suppression XVII, 3, 68, 444, 448, 451, 473, 474

Narni, Episcopus Narnien. 691

Nassino Pandolfo 11, 13, 70, 89, 149, 150, 181, 197, 223, 224, 242, 243, 308, 309, 439, 457,

Natale Alfio Rosario 4 Natalis confector: v. Andreana Nave, Navis: v. Bornado Navicula Sanctae Ursulae 267 Navis, de: v. Simona - Franciscus: v. Maria

Nazari Giovan Battista 40 Nazari Giovan Battista de Sayani XVI, 13, 28, 40-44, 92, 101, 102, 114, 138, 140, 145, 146, 173, 177, 190, 191, 201-204, 208, 214, 215, 240, 241, 247, 248, 374, 408, 417, 423, 426, 435, 439, 590, 595-608

Giovan Faustino di Francesco 40, 602

- Paola 40

Near East: v. Middle East Nemius Gaspar 420 Neri Philip 26 Netherlands 14 New Catholic Encyclopedia XIX Nibolento: v. Nuvolento Nicholas IV 121, 234

Nigolento: v. Nuvolento Noah 626

Nodari: v. Nazari de Sayani

Noè: v. Noah

Nona, None 538, 547, 560, 676 Notarial acts XV, XVI, 147, 298, 303, 352, 355, 357

- 1537: v. Angela, election

154534, 271, 273, 275, 300, 301, 304, 326, 358, 659-661

- 1546 343

- 1555 34, 146, 147, 271, 272, 297-300, 312, 360, 362, 363, 364, 365, 371, 662-663

- 1556 34, 147, 271, 272, 299, 312, 366, 663-664

- 1558 May 35, 271, 364, 365, 366, 369, 664, 665

- 1558 July 35, 271, 364, 365, 366, 369, 666-668

- 1559 35, 271, 371, 374, 671, 672

Notariis, Matheus de: v. Lucia

Novara 476

Novigrad: v. Cittanova

Nozia, Antonius de: v. Antonia; Ioanna

Nunciata: v. Annuntiata Nunciature of Venice 367

Nuove Costituzioni 349

Nuove Orsoline, New Ursulines 475, 487

Nuvolento 80, 81, 85, 87

Obicio cap. 657

Observance 14, 118, 691

Observants XXI, XXIII, XXIX, 117, 118, 121, 250, 532, 595, 603, 683

Occident 185, 385

Ochino Bernardino XXI, XXIII

Odasio David 367, 369, 665

Odorici Federico 177

Office of Our Lady 164, 165, 239, 242, 274,

538, 546, 560, 584-588

of St Ursula 412, 674-678

of the Dead 542, 551, 568

Offlaga Lucretia 376, 602

Oglio 141, 143

Oliveri and Manzoni 151

Olivieri Dante 157

Oloferne: v. Holofernes

Orange, Ursuline Martyrs 444

Oratorians 45, 52, 53, 54

Oratorio del Buon Gesù 489-492

Oratory, Fathers of the: v. Filippini

of France 52, 53

- of Isabetta Prato 14, 148, 150, 151, 156, 191, 234-239, 275, 276, 277, 326, 391

Orcibal Jean 53

Order of

Carmelites 691

- Friars Minor: v. Capuchins

- Hermits of St Augustine 691

Humiliati: v. Humiliati

- Preachers 691

St Augustine 250

- St Ursula XXVIII, 24, 37, 51, 53, 178, 347, 411-412, 416, 418, 419, 420, 432, 447, 486, 487, 491: v. Ursulines

Ordinatione 324, 325, 326, 456, 552

Ordinationi: v. Rules

Ordine et Ceremonie 380: v. Ritual

Ordini: v. Rules

Orient 260

Orisis, de: v. Flos

Orlando Furioso XXV

Orleans 412

Orphanage of the Pietà 18, 220: v. Annali Orphans of the Carità 235: v. Annali

Orzi, Orzinuovi 212, 339

Ospedale, Ospedali, Hospitals XVI, 594: v. Luoghi Pii

- Camposanto 227

- Carità 17: v. Incurabili (Incurables)

- Donne (Women) 16, 17, 220, 227

Grande or Maggiore (Major Hospital) 16,
 17, 136, 150, 218, 219, 220, 226

 Incurabili (Incurables) or SS. Trinità 16, 17,
 136, 140-143, 153, 208, 209, 210, 216, 218-221, 222-224, 227, 341, 347

- San Giacomo in Augusta 17, 198, 217, 219

- Santo Spirito 441

O.S.U.: v. Order of St Ursula

Othalengum: v. Gottolengo

Ottalengo: v. Gottolengo

Ottavio Fiorentino: v. Gondi

Ottoboni, Ottobono Pietro 219, 468, 471

Ottoman Empire: v. Turks

Oury Guy-Marie 412

Pace Giuseppe 104, 127, 128

Pace, padri della: v. Filippini

Pacheris, Pachieris, Beltrame de: v. Clara; Elisabeth

Padenghe 129, 132

Padua 76, 156, 179, 188

Pagani Antonio 520, 521

Pakisch, Antoinette de 449

Palazzo Bartolomeo 142-143, 171, 172, 177, 457

Palazzolo, Hector de 240

Paleotti Alfonso 321, 322, 506, 507, 509

- Gabriele 505, 506, 519

Palermo 63

Palestine 192

Palladia 261

Palladio Biagio, Blosius Fulginatensis 334, 335,

Pallai: v. Palladio

Pallatius Christophorus 670-673

Panadellis, Panatelli, Panateris, Baptista de: v.

Catharina

Panck Engilberto 695

Panicis, Io. Baptista de Lonato Marci Antonii

Panzolii, de: v. Laura

Paola Sberna of Foligno 489-494

Paolo, Pavolo da Angolo 274

- da Cremona 386

- da Terni 50, 466

Papal States 199, 450

Paraclete: v. Holy Spirit

Paradiso in terra 695

Parayré P. 693

Parenty 206

Paris 52, 53, 347, 411, 440

- Bibliothèque Mazarine 19, 48

-- Nationale 19, 33, 417, 425, 437, 439

- Faubourg St-Jacques 52

Parma 339

Parthenon Sanctae Ursulae 261

Pascha, Pasqua: v. Easter

Paschini Pio XXIII, 216-219

Paschis, de: v. Magdalena

Pasero Carlo XX, 142, 143, 150, 171, 457

Passi 110

Passio Mathaei 385

Passio Sanctarum 263-265, 268

Passion 100, 184, 191, 213, 459, 539, 547, 561,

562, 569, 575

Pastor Ludwig von 334, 335, 338, 340, 341

Pastoral visits XXI, 31, 341, 400, 473, 505

Patenglus: v. Patengola

Patengola 134, 161

- Agostino fu Gandolfo 132, 134, 135

- Antonia 135

- Bevegnuda 135

- Caterina degli Almici di Zono 129, 131-137,

176, 595, 603

- Costanzo 132, 133, 137, 595, 603

- Gandolfo 132, 133, 137, 595, 603

- Giovan Battista fu Gandolfo 129, 132, 135,

595, 603

Girolamo 129, 134-136, 152, 153, 154, 220, 222, 223, 229-231, 277, 292, 580, 599, 605-

222, 223, 229 607: v. Flora

- Monica 132, 133, 595: v. Isabella

- Nasimpasi, Nascimpace 135

- Stefano 135

Pater Noster 165, 538, 542, 547, 551, 568, 586 Paterno, de: v. Angelica; Catharina; Martha

Patrini, Maria Elena de 354

Patuzzi Lorenzo 244

Paul III XXIII, XXIV, 14, 18, 27, 29-31, 153, 154, 311, 325-328, 330, 335, 336, 338, 340, 341, 346-350, 421, 466, 507, 609, 611, 612, 615, 617, 644, 645, 647, 649, 651, 652, 654, 689: v. Bull

- IV 665, 667

- V 420, 421, 504, 506, 507, 509: v. Bull

Paula, Pavola

de Castiono 672

- de Pischeriis 272, 672

- di Grisi 657

- Sebastiani de Coradinis 662, 664

 sister of Martha in the chancellor's house at the Major Hospital 658

Pazzi, Mary Magdalene de' 48

PE: v. Polizze d'Estimo Pedeciocchi: v. Pedezocca

Pedezocca Leonella, Lionella 327, 359, 361, 362, 364, 374, 376, 391, 574, 602, 658, 659, 661, 672

- Zombaptista 308

Pedezocha, Pedezocchis: v. Pedezocca

Pedroche Franciscus: v. Maria Pedrochis, Picenus de: v. Maria

Pelizoni, di: v. Antonia

Pellettis, Iacobus de: v. Margarita; Veronica

Pelliccia Guerrino 71 Penco Gregorio 71 Pennotto Gabriele 238

Pentecost 114, 116, 119, 122, 168, 169, 538, 544, 561, 596, 606

- Easter of May 538, 546, 558

Peregrina 270, 648

- colonella of the Duomo 273, 300, 658, 659

- de Albricis 673

- de Seniga 273, 672

- di Cazali, Casali 273

- Petri de Cozalibus de Salodio 273, 660

Peroni Vincenzo 145 Personelli Catherina 588

- Laura, Lavora di Agostino 587, 588

Lucia 588Pescara 188

Peschera, Pescheri, Peschiera,

- Ascanio 379

- Camillo 379

- Gianpiero 273, 378

- Giovan Maria 312

- Girolamo 378, 379

- Giulia, widow Villi 378-380

- Laura 273, 378

- Paola 273, 378

- Paola, wife of Hieronymo Luzzago 305

- Susanna 379

Peschere (Le) 270, 648

Peschiera: v. Clara

Petit Office: v. Office of St Ursula

Petition

- Bull of Paul III, 1544 (Company of St Ursula): v. Bull

- of the Indult 30, 117, 333

Petra, Pedra

- del Todesco, de Theutonicis 658, 672

- Mathei Gisonelli 660

- Pauli de Flumine Nigro 660

Pauli de Vallibus 581

Petraglia Francesco 440

Petrus a S. Romualdo 694

Pezis, Antonius de 299: v. Martha

- Ioaninus de: v. Innocentia

Phanuel: v. Anna

Philip III (the Bold) 500

Piacenza 229, 230, 599

Pianet, pianetto: v. Planeta

Piasenza: v. Piacenza

Piazza, dalla, della, Antonio 351, 352, 355, 356,

379, 391, 409

- Carlo Bartolomeo 594

Piccolomini 381

Picha de Prandaliis 678

Piedmont 475

Pietà 414

Pietro Antonio da Venezia 695

Pieve de Bon: v. Dominica

di Cadore: v. Vigo di Pieve

Pilgrimages 9, 128, 172, 178, 184-215, 224, 232, 234, 253, 267, 270, 274, 276, 596, 597, 604, 605

Pilottis, Io. Petrus de: v. Martha

Pinnosa, Vinnosa 261, 262, 264

Pious Union 475-476, 482, 485, 487: v. Daugh-

ters of Mary Immaculate

Pisani Alvise 190

- Carlo Alessio 250, 251, 430, 432, 435

- Gio. Francesco 26, 60

Sebastiano 427

Pischeriis, de: v. Laura; Paula

- Johannes Maria de 365, 663

Pius V 504

VI 441-444

- VII 63, 445-446

- IX 449

- XII 349

Piza (La), colonella 300, 352, 353

Pizzoni Pavolo 589

Planeta (lira) 88, 133, 150, 242, 248, 338, 339, 378, 380

Plattis, Iacobus de: v. Dominica Plebe Abioni, de: v. Dominica

P.M.M.: v. Marchetti Pietro Maria

Pobladura, Melchiore a 45

Pochetti Giacomo 473

Poitiers 412

Pola, Johannes de la 97

Poland 68

Polanus, de Polinis, Christophorus: v. Martha

Pole Reginald 143, 223

Poligny 53

Polinis, de: v. Martha

Polish Union 66

Polizze d'Estimo XVI, 10, 80, 85, 90, 131, 132, 137, 138, 140, 179, 225, 273, 277, 303, 305-309, 326, 341, 374, 378, 380, 391, 410

Poltranga Giovan Paolo 313

Polver Erminia 89

- Giovanni 89

Pommereu, Mère de 53, 55, 411: v. Chroniques Poncarali Maffeo 217, 218, 219, 222

Ponte, Giovanni, Giacomo da 27

- Michelangelo da 12

Pontecarali, Cyprianus de 671

Pontifical

- Mainz (Romano-Germanic) 381, 385

- Mende 381, 385

- Roman 1485 381

-- 1497 381, 384

-- 1520 381

- Venice 381

Pontoliis, de: v. Angela

Ponzio, da Ponte, Pacifico 21, 39

Pope 202, 296, 408, 421, 422, 428, 454, 476, 493, 534

Porcelaga, Porcellaga, Portulaca, Portulachi, Portulachis de, Bianca 40, 147, 307, 352, 358, 361, 362, 373, 374, 376, 386, 387, 595, 602, 672, 673

- Bianca, Samson's daughter 361, 374

Carlo 374

- Galeazzo 374

- Giuffredo 374

- Giulia, Samson's daughter 374

- Samson 361, 374

- Veronica 374

Porro Giulio 20

Portulaca, Portulachi: v. Porcelaga

Positio, positiones 33, 61, 409, 425, 426, 429, 433, 437-441, 473, 481

Prandaglio: v. Merici

Prandaliis, de: v. Picha

Prata Isabetta: v. Prato

Prato 149, 374

Prato Bargnani Isabetta, Elisabetta, Helisabeth 29, 148-156, 209, 223, 225, 234, 235, 271, 273, 301, 308, 309, 326-328, 350, 352, 356, 359-364, 374, 376, 388, 390, 391-392, 393, 399-401, 404, 574, 595, 602, 658, 659, 662, 672: v.

Antonia; Oratory

- Agostino 149

- Gian Andrea 149, 150

- Gian Francesco 149, 150

- Gio. Paolo 148, 149

Prato spirituale 42

Presa Giovanni 24

Prima, Prime 538, 547, 560, 675

Prinzivalli Virginio 200

Prioli, Matio de 186

Prioris, Io. Iacobus de 659

Privilegia Virginum 31, 377, 617, 618

Process of beatification and canonization XVII, 6, 13, 19, 21, 26, 27, 32, 33, 37, 42, 44, 47, 51, 58, 59, 61, 77, 83, 104, 161, 167, 204, 207, 245, 247, 249, 277, 328, 329, 353, 354, 355, 356, 376, 404, 405, 408, 409, 410,

415-432, 433-443, 444, 445, 446, 455, 473,

481, 688-695: v. APC

Processes, executory: v. Executory processes

Processo Nazari XVI, 13, 28, 41, 42, 44, 66, 70, 90, 99-105, 112, 117-118, 121, 136, 137, 140, 144, 156, 157, 163, 166, 173, 174-176, 178, 181, 184, 210, 212, 213, 229, 230, 241, 271, 375, 408, 423, 442, 595-603

Procura pro Societate 34, 366, 663, 664

Procurators: v. Men

Proletti Faustinus: v. Gabriela

Protectors: v. Men

Protestantism 463 Provaglio Scipione 143

Provence 500, 504

Prüm: v. Wandelbert of

Prunettus Ioannes 695

Pucci Antonio 233, 583

Puglia, Piero della: v. Della Puglia

## Pugnatoribus, Horatius de: v. Aurelia

Quaglia Angelo 16 Quarré Anne du St-Sacrement 53 - Jean-Hugues 52-56, 205-208, 4

- Jean-Hugues 52-56, 205-208, 411, 418, 419, 434, 435, 446, 692

Quebec 412

Quinzani Stefana XXIV, XXV, 69, 212-214 Quinzano, Quinciano, Quinziano: v. Trappa

- Ioannes Maria Bartholomei de 665

- Laurentius Bartholomei de 665

Quirini Pietro XXIII

Rabacia 261
Rabikauskas Paulus 331
Raffaello di Brescia 657
Ragguaglio 436
Rama, er-Ram 192, 596
Rangoni Claudio 507
- Orazio 423
Ranuccio Pico 693
Raphael of Urbino 246, 280
Rasse 4, 5, 75, 81-84, 88, 89, 92-99, 103, 108, 423, 591
Ravelli Pietro 437

Recaldini Giovanni 30, 56, 467, 469

Reggio Emilia 507

Ravenna 224, 230, 552

Regia Deputazione Storia Patria 20

Registers: v. Libri

Registra supplicationum 31, 334

Registro delle Divote 474

Regola: v. Rule

Relics 199-202, 409, 414, 416, 474, 597, 605

Remondini, Mapheo di: v. Dominica

Renaissance XXII, XXVII, 198, 235, 259, 266

Rey F. 185

Rezate: v. Rezzato

Rezzato 143, 223, 293: v. Giovita

Rhine, Rhenus 264

Rhodes 112, 186

Richaudeau François-Pierre 447-449, 487

Riche Alliance (La) 693

Ricordi, Counsels 19, 23, 24, 25, 29, 64, 67, 70, 145, 164, 165, 176, 240, 268, 277, 284-289, 295, 297, 376, 384, 385, 398, 401, 411, 417, 427, 435, 466, 468, 471, 472, 473, 480, 481, 480, 489, 502, 504, 508, 576, 576, 574, 583

490, 498, 502, 504, 508, 526, 569-574, 593,

689

Rima, Betinus del: v. Margarita

Rimini 224

Rinaldini Luigi 145, 284, 293, 337, 461 Riperia Benacensis 304

- Sallodii: v. Catharina

Ripis, Hieronymus de 668: v. Luzzago

Risposta XVII, 26, 27, 67, 70, 160, 161, 318, 319, 320, 329, 455, 465, 626-644

Ritual 28, 29, 380, 381, 382, 383, 384, 385, 388, 389, 392, 467, 471, 490, 518, 519

Riva Betinus: v. Margarita

Riva Ginevra, Zenevra: v. Luzzago Ginevra

Riviera 76: v. Antonia; Joanna

Rivista araldica XXIX

Rivista Storia dell' Agricoltura 139, 306

Rivista Storia della Chiesa 224

Rizzinus Dominicus Gasparis 616

Rocca Giancarlo 71

Rockinger L. 337

Roermond, Ruremonda 14, 54

Rogation Days 168, 538, 546, 559

Roman Chancellery 335

Roman Curia XVIII, 33, 37, 58, 317, 323, 330, 333, 340, 343, 348, 409, 416, 417, 436-443, 617

Roman Union 19, 47, 66, 415, 486: v. AGUUR Romanino Girolamo 245-247, 277-280 Romano

- Angela 138

- Antonio: v. here Giovanni Antonio

- Apolonio, Appolonario 138

- Battista 137

- Catalina 138

- Francesca 138

Giovanni Antonio, Zua Antonio Darumano
XV, 10, 41, 83, 89, 90, 91, 100, 102, 103, 105, 114, 117, 125, 134, 137-138, 157, 159, 160, 161, 163, 167, 170, 172-177, 181, 184-205, 211, 214, 595-597, 599, 603, 604

Laurenzo 138

- Maria 138

- Olivero 138

- Paulo 138

Rome, Roma 32, 54, 63, 175, 183, 184, 187, 195, 199-204, 206, 264, 267, 329, 331-333, 339, 357, 415-419, 420, 421, 422, 425, 434, 436, 446, 583, 597, 599, 605, 606

Archives State 30

-- General Friars Minor Cap. 46

Biblioteca Nazionale: v. Biblioteca

Vallicelliana: v. Biblioteca

- Camposantor v. Ospedale

- Conservatory of St Cecilia 415

- Gesù 63
- Luoghi Pii 201, 202, 204, 205, 419, 434, 446, 597, 605
- Quattro Santi Coronati 583
- Quirinal 443
- Sack of Rome: v. Sack
- S. Giacomo in Augusta: v. Ospedale
- S. Lorenzo in Damaso 120
- S. Spirito: v. Ospedale
- SS. Rufina e Seconda 415
- St John Lateran 200, 201
- St Mary Major 201
- St Paul 200, 201
- St Peter 37, 200, 201, 407, 433, 445, 447, 448, 611, 612, 654, 656, 690
- Ursulines 32, 33, 54-56, 60, 207, 249, 415, 416, 418-420, 422, 429, 434, 442, 443, 447
- Via de' Greci 415
- Via Vittoria: v. here Ursulines

Romillon Jean-Baptiste 500, 501

Rosa Ludovico 589

Rosary 165, 584-588, 679, 682

Ross Bernarda 38, 68

Rossi, Damisella di 152, 155

- de, priest 657
- Ottavio 140

Rotingus Joannes Antonius 363

Rotterdam: v. Erasmus

Rule, Regola, Regole 166, 277, 287, 352, 360, 382, 383, 386, 387, 388, 389, 393-399, 451, 452, 453, 454, 455, 461, 462, 465, 469-474, 476, 483, 497, 513, 519, 520, 523, 526

242, 258, 267, 268, 276, 284, 285, 286, 288,

290, 303, 306, 311, 317, 324, 325, 329, 331, 332, 346, 348, 360, 364, 371-373, 376, 380-

381, 382, 383, 384, 386, 388, 389, 399, 400,

401, 404, 405, 426, 446, 451-460, 461, 463,

465, 470, 476-480, 484-487, 514, 517, 525, 526 Trivulzian manuscript XVIII, 20, 21, 284,

292, 297, 376, 380-383, 388, 404, 405, 426, 427, 451, 452, 455, 456, 458-461, 465, 526,

532-542

- Turlino edition XVII, XVIII, 19-23, 24, 28, 67, 70, 284, 292, 294, 297, 324, 353, 376, 380-383, 388, 400, 404, 405, 407, 435, 457-460, 465, 471, 485, 486, 513, 543-552
- Brescia 1975, 1976 24, 486

Rule, Borromean XVII, 32, 460, 465, 467, 470, 471, 479, 481, 490

- Brescia, 1582 XVII, 20, 64, 236, 301, 313, 324, 397-405, 407, 435, 460-469, 488-491, 494-496, 498, 510, 584

-- 1620 50, 335, 407, 465, 466, 467, 693

-- 1673 64, 407, 465, 467, 470-473, 478, 481, 484, 510, 512

-- 1795 467, 471

Rule, Brescia (Bologna 1672) 30, 31, 56, 57, 335, 336, 343, 407, 465, 467-470

Rule, Verzeri-Girelli 473-484

- 1866 473-484, 512

- 1888 483

- 1900 483

- 1921 483-486

- 1962 482, 486, 487

Rule, Bologna 488, 505-513

- 1603 505

- 1608 321, 322, 506-509, 513

- 1897 509

Rule, Cremona

- 1616 523-524

- 1634 523-524

Rule, Ferrara 488, 494

- 1587 403, 404, 409-411, 494-502, 508, 518

Rule, Ferrara-Tournon 488, 494

- 1597 404, 503-505, 518

Rule, Foligno 488, 693

- 1626 488-493

Rule, Milan 488, 502, 513-519

- 1567 285, 387, 400, 496, 514, 515, 516, 517, 522

**– 1569 39, 329, 408, 593** 

- 1570 39, 408, 518

- 1577 39

- 1582 39

- 1585 21, 39, 408, 503, 517-519

Rule, Modena

**– 1620 525, 526** 

Rule, Reggio

- 1611 507

Rule, Verona

- 1590 427

- 1594 427

1/77 427

- 1670 427

Rules, various

- Costituzioni e Regole SS. Rufina e Seconda 415
- Ordinationi et Regole Napoli 1609 524
- Ordini Compagnia Dimesse

- -- 1587 520, 521
- -- 1747 521
- Règle de la Pieuse Union 1866 487
- Regola generale Congregate Milan 1585 22
- Regola Pia Unione 1864 475, 476, 487
- Regolamento Congregate Salò 1854 474
- Regole Compagnia Figliuole della Madonna 523
- Regole Monasteri di S. Orsola 1643 22
- Rule of St Augustine 420, 505
- Rule of Treviso (Venice 1643) 693

Rumani, de: v. Romano Rumano, de: v. Andreana Ruysschaert José 337

Sabatia: v. Rabacia Sabbio Vincenzo 41, 48, 50 Sabusinis, Bertolettus de 671, 673 - Ioannes Angelus Bertoletti de 671, 673

Sack of Rome XXIX, 187, 217

Sacred Congregation: v. Congregation
 Penitentiary 117, 118, 180: v. Apostolic Penitentiary

Sacred Heart 487 Sagredo Cecilia 246 Saiano Marco 586

Saint, Saints, San, Santa, Sante, Santi, Santo 90, 91, 101, 104, 175, 184, 200, 236, 268, 269, 346, 387, 388, 414, 574, 586, 595, 603, 622, 633, 651, 654, 680

- Afra 234, 235: v. Brescia
- Agatha 594, 624: v. Brescia
- Agnese 594, 642, 685, 687
- Agostino, Augustine 420, 575, 620, 640
- Alessandro 538, 546, 560: v. Brescia
- Aloysius Gonzaga 63, 173
- Anastasio 680
- Angela 475, 482, 484, 485, 487: v. Brescia
- Anna 624
- Antonio abate, Anthony Abbot 91
- Antonio da Padova 679, 682
- Apostoli, Apostles: v. Apostles
- Barbara 499, 684, 685
- Barnaba, Barnabas: v. Brescia
- Bartolomeo: v. Brescia
- Basil: v. Venice
- Benedetto, Benedictus 631, 632: v. Brescia;
   Venice
- Benedetto da S. Filadelfio 445

- Benigno 680
- Bernardo 654
- Calocero 409
- Carlo 681, 685, 686: v. Borromeo
- Caterina d'Alessandria, Catherine of Alexandria 198, 235, 259, 266, 276, 277, 278, 466, 522, 605, 646, 684, 686, 687
- Caterina da Siena 684
- Cecilia 624, 642, 684
- Chiara 631, 634
- Clemente: v. Brescia
- Colette 445
- Croce: v. Brescia
- Elisabetta d'Ungheria, Elizabeth of Hungary 235
- Eustochium 234, 235
- Faustino, Faustinus 234: v. Brescia
- Francesco Caracciolo 445
- Francesco d'Assisi, Francis of Assisi XXIII,
   122, 168, 193, 323, 596, 604, 608, 631, 635,
   639
- Francesco Xaverio, Francis Xavier 63, 103, 679, 682
- Gaetano, Cajetan v. Brescia; Cajetan of Thiene
- Giacinta Mariscotti 445
- Giacomo in Augusta: v. Ospedale
- Giosefo, Joseph 215, 420, 624, 639
- Giovanni (Brescia): v. Brescia
- Giovanni (Salò): v. Salò
- Giovan Battista 634
- Giovan Evangelista 576, 620, 627
- Giovanni di Barbarano: v. Salò
- Giovanni e Paolo, John and Paul: v. Venice
- Girolamo, Ieronimus 217, 654
- Girolamo, Jerome Emiliani: v. Emiliani
- Gregory 296: v. Gregory I
- Ignazio di Loyola, Ignatius of Loyola 91, 120, 186, 187, 192, 346
- James of Compostella 183
- John Lateran: v. Rome
- Jovita 234
- Lazzaro 634
- Leonardo da Porto Maurizio 63
- Lorenzo, Lawrence 278, 279, 679, 682: v.
   Brescia
- Lorenzo in Damaso: v. Rome
- Luca 624, 634
- Lucia, Lucy 522, 687
- Mark: v. Venice
- Margherita: v. Treviso

Maria Calchera: v. Brescia

Maria de Carmeni: v. Brescia

- Maria dei Miracoli, Miraculorum: v. Brescia

Maria della Pace: v. Brescia

- Maria Egittiaca, Mary the Egyptian 91

Maria Elisabet 624

Maria Maddalena, Mary Magdalene 414, 681

- Maria Maggiore, Mary Major: v. Rome

- Marta, Martha 160, 624, 634, 637

Martin 183

- Monica 624

- Nazaro e Celso, Nazarius and Celsus: v. Bre-

- Nicholò, Nicola da Tolentino 166, 598

- Orsola, Ursula 43, 207, 234, 258-269, 278, 279, 382, 387, 411, 413, 415, 420, 461, 494, 499, 522, 552, 623, 624, 633, 636, 637, 642, 646, 648, 674-680, 683, 684, 687: v. Brescia

- Paolo, Paul 161, 200, 540, 541, 549, 565, 572, 601, 607, 608, 611, 620, 621, 625, 630,

637, 639, 654, 656: v. Rome

- Paula 234, 235

- Petrus et Marcellinus: v. Brescia

Philip Neri: v. Neri

- Pietro, Peter 200, 463, 536, 539, 544, 548, 555, 562, 611, 630, 634, 654, 656, 687

Praxedes 551: v. Borromeo

- Quattro Santi Coronati: v. Rome

- Rufina e Seconda: v. Rome

- Salvatore: v. Brescia Spirito: v. Ospedale

- Tecla, Thecla 160, 624, 637, 642

- Theodorus 552

Veronica 200

- Vicenzo 680

Vincent de Paul 207

- Vincenzo, Vincent 630

- Zacharia 624

- Zanipolo, John and Paul: v. Venice

- Zeno: v. Brescia

- Zoan: v. Giovan Evangelista

Saint-Cyran 52

Saint-Omer 53

Sala

Filippino 171

Filippo 170, 607

Sali Filippo, Modesta, Ercole di 171

Salò 3, 7, 8, 44, 47, 77, 83-85, 101, 107-123, 127-130, 149, 179, 180, 370, 427, 582, 583, 593, 594, 596, 604: v. Libri del Comune; Vasiano

- Archivio Antico del Comune 75, 83

- Archpriest and Chapter 692

- Commune 83, 84 - Disciplina 118

Madonna del Rio 109

- Mayor and Deputies 692

- S. Bernardino 83, 84, 118

- S. Giovanni, piazzetta di 83

S. Giovanni di Barbarano 409

- Strette (Le) 103

- Ursulines, congregated 474

Ursulines, secular 474

Salò, Salodium: v. Peregrina

Salodio, de: v. Antonia; Ioanna

Salvatori Filippo Maria 63, 64, 405, 429, 436, 442, 471, 472, 473, 478-481

- Giuseppe Maria 434, 442

- Tomaso Maria 442

Sancta, Santa

- colonella of S. Giovanni 300, 657, 659

- Cypriana de Locadellis 658, 660

- de Valtrompia 673

Sancta Euphemia, Iacobus de: v. Catharina

Sanctina, Santina

de Calvasezio 663

- Lucae de Guereriis de Calvazesio 662

Santabona Francesco 69

Sanudo Marin: v. Sanuto

Sanuto Antonio 210

Marino 171, 185-190, 193-195, 197, 210

Saraceno Gian Battista 372, 373

Saracens 192

Saramondi Gianfrancesco, Giovan Francesco

248, 608 Satan: v. Devil

Saturia 261

Saturnina 261

Saula 261

Saumur 412

Savallo, de: v. Martha

- Caterina 342

- Cypriano 342

Donato 219, 325, 336, 341, 342, 353, 362, 469, 552, 611, 647, 658

Jacomo Francesco 342

Leonora 342

Savanni Francesco 245, 247, 280, 281, 687

Savoldo Gian Girolamo 278

Savoy, Duchess of 134

Savoy: v. Maurice of

Saxe: v. Marie de Savani: v. Nazari de Savani Sberna Paola: v. Paola of Foligno Scalvini Vicentius Bernardini 377, 617 Scalvo, Zuan di: v. Maria Scardona, Episcopus Scardonen. 691 Scarparotti Iacobinus: v. Agnes Schiantarelli Maria Luisa (Natalina) 51, 52, 57, 61, 249, 250, 415, 416, 418, 419, 433, 436-439, 441-444 Schiavonia 194, 597 Scholastica - Bertolini de Garginis 275, 301, 660 - da Leno 300, 301, 658 de Zenuchinis 672 Schönau: v. Elisabeth

Scotti Giovanni 180, 523, 524
Scripture: v. Bible
Scuola S. Orsola: v. Venice
Secco d'Aragona Marc'Antonio 153
Secondo Libro Generale: v. Libri
Secular Institute: v. Federation
Seidel-Menchi S. XXIX
Seinsheim Charlotte 449
Seniga, de: v. Peregrina
Senigaglia 224
Sensa (La): v. Ascension
Sentia 261
Sequela Christi XVI, 159-162

Serafini Angela 491 Serafino da Bologna 238, 277, 386, 387 Serafino, Fra 77 Seramondis, Ioannes Franciscus de 671 Seraphinis, de: v. Blancha Serenissima 75, 109, 143, 185, 210

Serlis, Thoma de: v. Angela Sermo in natali 261, 262 Sesia 213

Sesta, Sexte 538, 547, 560, 676

Seynaeve Marie XV Sfondrati Nicolò 523: v. Gregory XIV

Paolo 489
Sforza Alessandro 368
Barbara 368, 664
Francesco: v. Francesco

Sibaldis, Crescimbene de: v. Margarita

– Ioaninus de: v. Maria

Sicily 193, 194

- King of 690

Signatura of the Briefs 335

Silvestro, Dominican 372

Simona 270, 648

- ancilla Mariae de Advocatis 271, 581

- Borni 271

- Ioannis Mariae de Bornato de Navis 271, 662, 663

Morganti de Bornado 271, 660
 Sisteron, Episcopus Sistarien. 691
 Sixtus V 409, 503

Soldo Carlo 362, 658, 659

Solferino, Solfrino 172, 211, 596, 604

Somasca XXIV

Somaschans XXIII, 197, 224, 523, 524

Somelli Aricus 97

Sommervogel Carlos 49, 51, 52, 60, 63, 64

Soncino 212, 214

Sonico di Valtrompia: v. Balzarotti; Malgarotti

Sophie de Saxe 449

Sopraponte, di 240: v. Dominica; Margarita

Soraga Ludovico 306, 670

Sospiri Simone 34, 365, 366, 368, 369, 664, 665

Sourdis, François de 418, 420 Spadariis, Camillus de: v. Maria

Spain XX, 119, 241

Spalentiis, Spalenzis Baptista, Ioannes Baptista

de: v. Gratiosa; Maria Spanish 177, 229 Speciano Cesare 523, 524

Spinone Giovanni Battista 587

Spirito Santo: v. Holy Spirit
Spirituality XVIII, 28, 163, 198, 258, 267-269, 283, 285-291, 298, 302, 349, 359, 381-385, 401, 415, 418, 419, 452, 453, 457, 459, 461, 462, 475, 482, 491, 493, 495, 501, 502, 504, 506-510, 514, 516, 517, 519, 520, 524, 525, 553-555, 560, 563-566, 569-574, 622, 624, 625, 632, 639, 643

Spoleto, da: v. Cherubino Spondanus Henricus 694 Stampa Gaspara XXV Statutes 146, 147, 216, 217 Stefani Angelo 103, 115, 116, 118

- Federico 171

Stella

- Aldo 367

- Bartolomeo 69, 134, 141, 144, 217, 218, 219, 222, 223, 224

- Fermo 213

Storia di Brescia 69, 280 Straeschwitz Marie 449 Stramazis, de: v. Elisabeth

Strasburg 189

Strovezari 98 Suleiman 186, 194, 597 Sultan 185 Summarium Additionale 20, 21, 37, 46, 51, 409, 426, 427, 455, 456, 459, 688-695 Supplex libellus 429, 430 Supplica: v. Petition Supraponte: v. Sopraponte Suriano Francesco 192 Suspiris, Simon de: v. Sospiri Svampa Domenico 509 Swiss 177 Switzerland 45 Sybille: v. Mazan Synagogue 645 Synods - Brescia 468, 485 - Milan 39

Tabernolis, Matheus de: v. Iacobina Tabulatiis Bartholomeus Gabrini, Gelmini, de 671, 673 Tacchella Lorenzo 338 Tacchi Venturi Pietro XX, XXII, 119, 216, 217, 286, 339 Taddea Gaffura, Gaffuri 273 Tadino Gabriele 112 Tamburini Filippo 30 Tamburinus D.F. 690 Tarello Agostino 139 - Camillo 139 Cecilia: v. Gallo - Ercole 139 - Giambattista 139 Tarolli Elisa XV, 24, 486 Tartaglia Nicolò 112, 113 Tartalea: v. Tartaglia Tauler 119 Tayardellis, Franciscus de: v. Catharina Tayetta Camilla 376, 602 Te Deum 444, 602 Termoli 338, 367, 368, 369, 665 Terni: v. Paolo da Tertiary nuns: v. Mount Sion Tervarent, Guy de 261, 262, 263, 265 Terza, Tierce 538, 547, 560, 675 Testamento 19, 23-25, 29, 46, 48, 50, 64, 67, 70, 145, 154, 155, 176, 240, 268, 284, 286-288, 289, 290, 291, 293, 297, 298, 302, 303, 307, 309, 352, 360, 376, 391, 411, 417, 427, 435,

468, 471, 472, 473, 481, 490, 574-579, 593,

687, 689 Testamentum... Genebriae 35, 242, 272, 306, 371, Theatines XXIII, XXIV, 180, 224 Theodora, Teodora - de Isipinis 672 Michaelis de Vitalibus 660 - serva Marthae de Cazago 660 Theodosia, Archbishop of 690 Theutonicis, de: v. Petra Thiene: v. Cajetan of Third Order of St Francis 46, 117, 118, 119, 137, 155, 168, 195, 233, 234, 245, 250, 279, 281, 283, 323, 691, 692: v. Angela, tertiary Third Orders 258, 283 Thoma a S. Aloysio 692 Tiepolo Maria Francesca 211, 427 Tinelli 94 Tini Michel 518 Tirandis, Franciscus de: v. Camilla Titian 245 Todesco, del: v. Petra Tolentino: v. S. Nicholò Tomasino da Lodi, de Laude 95, 98 Tommaso da Modena 267 Tonoli, di: v. Margarita Torcello 195 Torelli Luigi 694 Toscolano: v. Alberti Pietro Tosi Giuseppe 4 Toulouse 347 Tournon 404, 488, 503-505 Tours 183, 412 - St Martin 183 Tracagni, Tracagno, Tracchagni 83, 84 - Bernardino 83 Doctor 85, 239 Trappa Giovanni Battista da Quinzano 31, 327, 343, 345, 614-616 Travayado, Bertolinus de: v. Catharina - Pecinus de: v. Martha Treccani degli Alfieri Giovanni 69 Trent, Trento 76: v. Council of - Episcopus Miletopolitan. coad. 691 - Giorgio da: v. Antonia Trentinis, de: v. Antonia Trêves, Elector of 690 Treviso XXX - S. Margherita 267 Tribesco Giacomo 8, 12, 13, 66, 70, 90, 107, 110, 113, 116, 156, 244, 439, 520, 656, 657

Tridentine Decrees XXI, 504: v. Council of Trent

Trimusio, Luca de: v. Catharina

Trinità, Trinity 293, 385, 387, 388, 461, 535, 543, 553, 580, 634, 650, 651, 656: v. Confraternity; Ospedale Incurabili

Troiani Domenico 418 Trussi Giulia 376, 602

- Laura 376, 602

- Mario, Trussius Marius 377, 618

Tulle 420

- Episcopus Tutellen. 691

Tunis 190

Tunisia 193

Turks 185, 186, 194, 197, 370, 596, 604

Turlino Damiano XVII, XVIII, 28, 67, 285, 353, 380, 553

- Eredi (heirs) 24, 28, 381

Turlot 692

Ubero Fortunato 694 Ubertis, Paulus de 698

Ugone Giovanni: v. Quarré Jean-Hugues

Ugoni Ottaviano 670 Umbrian Legation 338 Undset Sigrid 22, 68 Ungheria: v. Hungary

University Catholic of Milan 24

- of Louvain 52, 53, 416

- of Milan 4

- Pontifical Gregorian 331

Urban VIII 407, 410, 411, 418, 424, 429, 430 Urbino, Duchess of: v. Gonzaga Elisabetta Urgnani, Urgnanis de, Urgnanus Giorgio 345, 616

Giovan Battista, Joannes Baptista 345, 616
 Urgnano Ludovico 367, 370, 667

Ursula, Orsola 261

ancilla Ioannis de Chizolis 581

- Cinalii household 658

- Defendi de cararia Maringoni 581

- Philippi Maringoni 581

- Stephani Marengoni 660, 662, 664

Ursula VM: v. St Ursula Ursule de Ste-Catherine 412

Ursulines: v. Company; Brescia; Rome

- Bahia 420

- Blois 447, 449, 487

- Bordeaux 347, 418

- Brescia 57, 220, 280, 496

- Cologne 54

- congregated XXIV, 51, 423, 504

- Dijon 53, 56, 415

- Dinant 53

- Flemish 415

- Huy 53

- Landshut 51, 55, 57

- Liège 51, 52, 53, 420

- Lille 53

- Lyons 347

- Mons 53, 54, 415

- Orleans 412

- Paris 53, 347

- Poligny 53

religious 60, 411, 448, 486, 491, 504:
 v. Monasteries; Order of St Ursula

- Rome: v. Rome, Ursulines

- Saint-Omer 53

- Salins 53

- secular 412, 416, 423, 432, 474, 476, 484, 486, 487, 504, 520, 524: v. Company

- Toulouse 347

- Tours 412

- Tulle 420

- Valenciennes 54, 415

- Venice 246

Usupina Anna 354, 520

Usupini Laura 272

Usupino Giovan Paolo 391

Vailate, Vaylate de: v. Ludovica

- Betini de: v. Lucretia

Valcamonica XXI, 78, 299

Valenciennes 54, 206

Ursuline martyrs 444

Valentini Andrea 11

Valerianus Bergomensis 145, 181, 247, 248, 609

Valgulio Carlo 171

Valiera Donata 521

Valiero Agostino 495, 521, 522

Vallabio Bernardino 219

Vallibus, Paulus de: v. Petra

Vallis Sabii: v. Sabusinis

Valtortis, Augustinus de: v. Barbara

Valtrompia 235: v. Sancta; Margarita

Martinus de: v. Ioanna

Vanderstein Ursule Thérèse Joseph 415

Vangelo: v. Gospel

Varal, Varallo, Verale XX, 140, 178, 183, 184, 191, 212-215, 232, 270, 272, 274, 597, 599, 605

Vari Santi bresciani 13, 41, 66

Vasiano, Vasianis de, Vasianus, Giovan Giacomo, Ioannes Iacobus da Salò, da Desenzano 370, 663, 666, 669

Vatican

- Archives Secret: v. Archives

Biblioteca Apostolica: v. Biblioteca

 Council II 64, 450 Vaucluse, Baron de 500

Veneria: v. Venier

Venetian Lombardy 3, 9, 75, 606

Venetians 177

Venetiis, de: v. Francisca; Lucia

Veni Creator 384, 483

Venice, Venezia, Vinegia XX, XXIX, 11, 50, 76, 90, 109, 113, 134, 142, 175, 184, 185, 188, 189, 193, 194, 195, 197, 198, 201-204, 210, 219, 231, 263, 266, 370, 378, 381, 419, 434, 494, 521, 596, 597, 604, 605, 667: v. Pietro Antonio

- Apostolic Legate 35, 437, 666, 667

- Archives Patriarchal Seminary 19, 34, 61, 78, 328, 417

Archives State 34, 61, 427

- Council 143, 189, 190

Dimesse 521, 522

Government 190

- Holy Sepulchre 195, 196, 202, 208, 597, 604

- Hospital for Incurables 196, 197, 198, 202, 208, 597, 604

 Luoghi Pii 202, 203, 205, 210, 211, 419, 434, 597, 604

- Patriarch: v. Contarini Antonio

- St Basil 197

St Benedictus 667

- St Mark 26, 60

- San Zanipolo, Sts John and Paul 266

- Scuola di S. Orsola 266, 267

Senate 428, 605

- Ursulines 246

Venier Beatrice 195

Venturi Pio 509-513

Verale: v. Varallo

Vercelli 213

Vergerio Pier Paolo 338, 339

Vergini: v. Virgins

Vernazza Ettore 216, 217

Giovanna Battista 216, 217

Verona 32, 60, 61, 76, 77, 78, 325, 336-338, 414, 423, 429, 433, 437, 439, 440, 444, 494, 505, 519, 521, 611, 678, 682, 683: v. Lippomano P.

Biblioteca Comunale 427

- Company of Saint Ursula 682

- Episcopus Veronen. 691

- S. Giovanni Ev. della Beverara 437

- Ursulines 682, 683

Veronensis Io. Antonius: v. Dominica

Veronica 200

da Cortona 63

- Ioannis Iacobi de Pelettis, Pellettis 662, 663

Verri Pietro 177

Vertua, de: v. Margarita

Verzeri Girolamo XVII, 451, 473-478, 481-485, 512

Vesontio: v. Besançon

Vesoul 503

Vespri, Vêpres 538, 547, 560, 677

Vezzoli Giovanni 278, 279

Viaticum 120, 129

Vicar: v. Muzio

Vice-Duke of Candia 193: v. Minio Marco

Vicenza 76, 188

Company of the Dimesse 520, 521

Vicinia, vicinie 5, 86, 87

Victoria, Vitoria

Antonii beretarii 581

Antonii de Ardesio 660

- de Grilis 672

Vie de la B. Mère 206

Vienna 12, 140

Vigo di Pieve di Cadore 267

Vigotti Gualberto 514

Villi, Giacomo Antonio di 378

- Giulia née Peschiera: v. Peschera

Villio, Counts of 104, 682

Christophorus 104, 682

Vincent de Paul 207

Vinegia: v. Venice

Vinnosa: v. Pinnosa

Vioni Elena 195, 196

Marco 195

Virgin Mary, Madonna 90, 102, 104, 160, 268, 278, 279, 354, 387, 388, 420, 473, 482, 483, 484, 499, 513, 520, 569, 572, 574, 621, 622 624, 637, 639, 643-645, 650, 656, 668, 679, 682, 683, 685, 689

- Assumption of 234, 442, 443

Virgins 90, 124, 125, 160, 162, 624, 637, 642, 643

Virgins of the Company: v. Company of St Ursula

Virgins of the government 274-275, 290, 291, 292, 294-301, 304, 310, 318, 382, 389, 402, 459, 551, 552, 560, 566, 567, 579
Visconti Alessandro 177
Visdomini Franceschino 38, 408, 496, 517
Visions 102, 103, 104, 105, 124-130, 138, 165, 254, 593, 595, 601, 603, 608, 621, 678, 683, 685: v. Brudazzo; Machet
Vitalibus, Michaelis de: v. Theodora
Vitelli Giovanni Battista 489, 490
Vivarini Antonio 266
Viviano 217
Volta Boncompagni Ippolita 51
Vow, vows 43, 70, 257, 287, 321, 354, 385-387, 467, 471, 484, 504, 516, 525, 540, 549, 564,

Wandelbert of Prüm 261, 262 Witches XXI Women XV, XVI, XXIV, XXV, XXVII, XXX, 9, 15, 111, 152-155, 162, 232, 233, 254, 255, 256, 419, 448-450, 498, 502, 505, 506, 519, 525

602, 652

Zabelli, Zanbelli, Andriana: v. Andreana Zabellis, de: v. Andreana; Iulia – Martialis de: v. Andreana – Natalis de: v. Andreana; Iulia Zaccaria Antonio Maria XXIII, 120

Zacchi Beniamino 14 Zaffo: v. Jaffa Zagi, di: v. Dominica Zambellini (Giovanni Bellini) 245 Zanbelli: v. Zabelli Zancan M. XXV Zane Paolo 219 Zanetti, doctor of law 248, 609 - Giovanni 217, 218, 219, 222 - Girolamo 35, 146, 242, 247, 299, 363-366, 369, 370 - Girolamo, Hieronymus, di Comino 662, 663, 666, 670, 671, 673 Guid'Antonio 58 Zaninus Aymerici de Bassano: v. Merici Zenebra, Zenevra: v. Ginevra Zenuchinis, de: v. Maria; Scholastica Zigliani Giuseppe 337, 342 Ziletti Antonio 662 Ziliano Lombardo: v. Lombardi Zinelli: v. Dorosilla Zono: v. Patengola Caterina Zoppa, della: v. Annuntiata Zorzi Marino Giovanni 48, 50, 467 Nicolò 193 Zorzo: v. Monte Zuan de Merigo: v. Merici Giovanni

Zucchi F. 220

Zurich 189

